

# HOW TO GUIDE FOR MENTORS

# M



in European Voluntary Service





# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT THIS GUIDE IS?

This guide will support individuals through their roles and responsibilities as a mentor within EVS, as well as show them the benefits they can enjoy.

## WHY WE MADE IT?

The tool was designed to motivate new, energetic youth to join the EVS mentor process. In addition, we created this guide for current mentors, to share ideas and best practices.

## WHO MADE IT, WHERE?

This guide was created by representatives of six NGOs active in the youth field, from Algeria, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Poland and Tunisia. Through our collective experience and expertise, as well as a strong commitment to volunteering principles, we developed this tool during an 8 day workshop in Hammamet, Tunisia, in February 2016.







# WHO IS A MENTOR IN EVS?

A **mentor** is a person who likes to work with youngsters, and who is familiar with non-formal education and the setup of the EVS program. They are someone who is motivated to support the volunteer in their learning process and act as a guide in the hosting country. Although a typical profile for a mentor doesn't exist, it is often useful that the mentor is young and active, with availability, preferably with volunteer experience.

A mentor should be a local person, active in the host community to be able to give light on the context and the country where the EVS takes place. This can help with the integration of the volunteer within the local community. In addition, the relation between hosting organization and mentor should be communicative, as this will support the fluid running of the volunteer activities. It is preferable that the mentor is not linked with the hosting organisation, to provide objective input for the volunteer, especially in cases where mediation is needed.

There are many different roles a mentor can assume. The role taken depends on the needs of the EVS volunteer in the given situation. On any given day, the mentor may perform one or all of the roles. Overtime and with experience, mentors can learn to assume different roles more easily. The following is not a definitive list but includes some of the key roles that a mentor can assume.

- **GUIDE:** the mentor can use their previous life experience to support the volunteer through their professional and personal development and in helping them to become more independent throughout the period of

their project. In some moments, explanations about religion, culture or other particular aspects, tradition of the hosting country will need to be presented to the volunteers.

- **COUNSELLOR:** encouraging and helping the volunteer to identify and resolve any issue that may arise. As the first instance in problematic situations, the mentor is expected to act as the so-called 'official friend', through providing support and advice.

- **MOTIVATOR:** there may be times in which the mentor will need to help the volunteer to maintain momentum and motivation in their work. This will require a positive attitude and maybe a bit of creativity.

- **Coach:** the mentor can offer insight gained from previous experience to help the volunteer improve their competences and ensure the right direction of development. Mentors can also inspire the volunteer to uphold positive values and good attitudes.

- **Advisor:** Listening and giving advice when the volunteer needs it.

- **Door opener:** The mentor helps the volunteer communicate with others and creates interaction opportunities for the volunteers within the local community.



# WHAT ARE THE ROLES AND TASKS OF THE MENTOR?

The listed roles and tasks of the mentor are not to be strictly applied in every case, in fact they depend on:

- The type of project
- The Hosting organization (vision, work, environment...)
- The volunteer
- The country

Therefore, the roles and the tasks should be re-defined in every mentoring experience.

You as a mentor are the main supporter, coordinator and information-giver for the volunteer.

Before the arrival of the volunteer, you should prepare and provide him with an info-pack that includes the main information related to the hosting city/country, its culture and a map listing a selection of interesting points, the means of transportation available (advantages, costs, working hours...) and a map from "home" to the place of work. You should also try to collect as much information as possible about the volunteer and the project from the Hosting Organization, in order to discuss with them their expectations, fears and desired learning outcomes.

Once the volunteer arrives, remember that you are their first aid during the EVS experience in a foreign country, so you should always try to be there for them. You are expected to support the volunteer socially, emotionally, culturally and learning-wise .

You are responsible for providing support within the learning process, for example helping the

volunteer to draft the learning plan; discussing the learning achievements with the volunteer; helping to organize the learning achievements in view of the Youthpass certificate; participating in the meeting with the coordinator and the volunteer to evaluate the project and adapt the activities accordingly .

Based on the trust and confidence you build up with the volunteer during your relationship, you support them in challenging situations. You play an important role in any conflict and crisis situation acting as a mediator, listener, and supporter.

Keep in mind, that even after the end of the project your role is not over yet. It is very important for the project to keep in touch with the volunteer and to have an active participation in the follow-up and the evaluation. Find out how the volunteer is doing, about their personal and professional development, does he / she needs help for follow up ( through Skype, e-mails) .

What not to expect from you as mentor?

Although you are the friend and confident person for the volunteer, you are not expected to be:

- Financially responsible for them.
- Legally responsible for them.
- Pushing them in a hard way
- Responsible for their misbehavior when doing the activity.
- Available 24 hours per day for them or being their shadow.





# WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A MENTOR?



## 1. TRAVEL WITHOUT MOVING!

Have you always wanted to discover other culture but never had the time or money to actually travel abroad? Why not try to become a mentor? EVS mentoring provides you with the opportunity to get to know foreigners traveling to the place you live. This way you can develop language skills and learn new perspectives on life while not leaving your home.

## 2. TEACH AND LEARN!

This unique experience invites self-discovering and promotes mutual development. The mentor does not only teach but also learns. By exchanging skills and experiences, both the volunteer and the mentor grow together.

## 3. IT MAKES YOU HAPPY!

Mentorship fosters self-improvement by challenging the mentor to broaden their horizon. Watching the volunteer develop with your assistance is truly a satisfactory experience by virtue of accomplishing the task at hand. Such achievements give more confidence to the mentor.

## 4. LEARN TO COMMUNICATE.

The mentor-volunteer relationship is a sensitive and important one. You're friends but also have your limits. Establishing this kind of mutual agreement involves great communication skills that are helpful in your future life as similar challenges can be found in various relationships both in professional and personal life.

## 5. IT'S NOT JUST PERSONAL!

Thanks to this experience the mentor acquires new skills like time-management, flexibility, group management, task evaluation – all these make them more prepared for their job. Having a wide network of international friends but also organisation contacts makes you stand out on the job market.





# HOW TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR BEING A MENTOR?

First, a mentor should know about the Erasmus+ and Euromed programmes and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) world in particular. It is necessary to help EVS volunteers in an EVS context. It would be nice if the mentor takes part of some trainings courses related with this topic. Also, it can help if an ex volunteer acts like a mentor or if ex volunteers or people who are already mentors are sharing experiences with futures mentors, for understand better about volunteering and mentoring.

The mentors can communicate their free time schedule to the volunteers.

They can also share hobbies and activities where volunteers will be capable to join to bond more with the mentor. In the same way, the mentoring activity has to be part of this time schedule.

Language and communication skills: it should be necessary that mentors speak fluently a common language with the volunteers. It is more likely to know English and at least some words in the native language of the volunteers. In the same way, mentors can make efforts to know more about their mentee, for example by asking about various things during the first meeting.

Continuous development: mentoring should be a continuous process where the person never finishes their formation. Doing an internship or a meeting with an experienced mentor can also help. One can also seek the advice of professionals like psychologist, youth leaders or medical staff.

Their input can improve the skills of a mentor before, during or after doing an EVS programme. Besides, for making the mentor's work easier, this person can collect a phone list

with the mainphone numbers that a volunteer needs during EVS, like: Police, emergencies, hosting organization, sending organization, pharmacy, plumber, electrician, etc. The mentor can also make use of other useful tools like a personal map, with relevant information for the volunteer.





# HOW TO HANDLE CHALLENGES?

## CULTURE SHOCK

Culture Shock includes a sense of confusion, anxiety, stress, disorientation and discomfort. One may experience culture shock once coming to a foreign country, environment, society and culture. It can be caused by language barrier, technology gap, cultural differences and even a change in climate. There's no best solution to overcome cultural shock, the perception of it depends on the individual's personality.

As a mentor, try to provide all the useful information about the culture of your country, religion, attitudes, traditions to the Sending Organization so they can use it during PDT (Pre-departure training).

When the volunteer comes to your country (community) try to introduce him/her to new environment and people, and help to integrate to make his/her stay easier, in order to overcome the shock and reach his/her goals.

Keep in mind that even the smallest differences, such as greetings, gestures, facial expressions, perception of distance and comfort zone, body language, attitudes might be seen differently and confusing for the volunteer. Try to always explain the behaviours, to prevent uncomfortable situations and misunderstandings.

At the very beginning of the EVS, try to offer more of your time for meetings, discussions and finding solutions to overcome the volunteers problems. Keep an open mind and show that whatever seems different does not mean it is wrong. Present a positive side of diversity.

Make sure that by time the volunteer meets more and more people, have a chance to join local events, festivals, and get familiar with the surroundings and the new cultural environment. Remember that laughter can be a good medicine for anything. Don't let him/ her take everything too seriously, make him/her reflect on the situation and who knows maybe it won't look so bad anymore.

Give him a chance to understand but also to be understood and encourage him/her to share his/her own culture. Cultural, cuisine, dancing and singing events or days could be organized where the volunteer can show his/her culture, or where the community shows its own culture to the volunteer/s,





# LOSS OF MOTIVATION

During the mentorship period, your volunteer may lose motivation, you have an important role in encouraging them.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DISCOURAGEMENT?

When you see your volunteer down most of the time, not working effectively or as he/she uses to, and not interacting with workmates and others you should know that loss of motivation is 'attacking' the youngster. So the first thing to do, is asking yourself

## WHY DID HE/SHE LOSE MOTIVATION? CAUSES?

Ask yourself the question, why did he/she lose motivation; actually, this can have many causes and it depends mainly from the volunteer but below you can find list of some of the reasons:

- Homesickness
- Disappointed of the work type he/she is doing
- Down for personal reasons (home issues, relationships...)
- Not feeling affective
- Bored
- Negative environment at work or house
- Not being able to communicate with the society
- Etc.

## TAKING ACTION

After noticing the symptoms, you should:

1. Sit with the volunteer to discuss the reasons of the loss of motivation (don't forget to make him feel comfortable and to communicate with him effectively to be able to identify the next steps)
  2. Involve the hosting organization in the process to ensure the best result.
- Once you are aware of the situation, you should be able

to draw a path (set a plan) to help the volunteer regain motivation. Below you will find some intervention methods that you can use but remember these are only examples that you can benefit from but may not be applicable in your case. Other methods can also be applied.

The intervention methods depends from the country, the association, the volunteer and the conditions and cause; so you should be able to identify the best intervention plan:

- Remind the volunteer of the humanitarian and professional aims and goals of their EVS.
- Create a support group/positive environment for the volunteer.
- Involve the volunteer in more social/cultural activities and events; this will allow them to meet new people, know more about the culture in order to be integrated in society
- Work with the host organization to discover the challenges in there and the status (social and professional) of the volunteer, and to improve this status (create a positive environment)

- Make them a movie about the interesting and beautiful sites and activities in the country.
- Arrange with the host organization to allow volunteers to organize activities and apply ideas that they like and are enthusiastic about.
- Show them the important impact of their work on the society.
- Show them the reward they receive from this experience: personal and professional skills, work experience, knowledge....
- Help them find the inner happiness and motivation.





## TIPS

- Understand the possibility of the presence of a cultural shock (check p. 7 to know more about this topic )
- Know the cultural background of the volunteer
- Find out more about them: dreams, hobbies, interests...
- Practice active listening and effective communication
- Build bridges between the volunteer and the society, and between the volunteer and the host organization
  - Be creative
  - Be open minded

## SMALL ACTIVITIES FOR BIG DIFFERENCE

Laughter yoga  
Meditation  
Watching movies  
Long walks  
Listening to music  
Swimming





# CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

1. To avoid unnecessary conflicts, the mentor should treat all the volunteers equally without any favouritism, because it may lead to upset the other volunteers where they can lose their motivation and leave the project.
2. If a big conflict will take place between the mentor and the volunteer, during their discussion the mentor needs to convince them that they are not enemies but their mission is to collaborate on a project together and by time they can work on creating a good friendship between both of them.
3. In case the mentor loses interest and wants to quit mentoring or has difficulties during a project, mentors should directly contact the host organization
4. The mentor shouldn't have any ego issues in his personality. The project circulation comes first, as a priority, so they should always check with EVS organizations. If they face any difficulties, and commit mistakes, they need to admit mistakes in order to fix them.

## EXTREME SITUATIONS

The aim of this chapter is not to scare you but you have to be prepared that the situations we are going to mention can happen – both in the EVS context and other life aspects. If you become the trusted person for the volunteer it is highly possible that you are the first contact person should any of these problems arise.

### 1. HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Be that a simple running nose or a life-threatening accident you will probably be the first person contacted in all emergencies concerning your volunteer. To be able to deal with the situation effectively and without losing your clear mind it is best to prepare yourself for the worst case scenarios. Here are some suggestions of what can help you. Have these written down and easily available.

- You should know the procedures of the medical treatment for foreigners in your country (Is there a specialized hospital for them? What are the insurance regulations? It is country specific so you have to find out on your own)
- You should have a contact person in the home country of the volunteer (just in case)
- You should ask the volunteer to give you all the medical information beforehand (medication they are taking, allergies, chronic diseases)



## 2.LEGAL PROBLEMS

An EVS volunteer may face different types of legal problems during their mobility. The most common are the ones concerning visas or residency permits, especially if one of the parties (volunteer, hosting organization) is not from the European Union.

It may also happen that volunteer's documents or other belongings are lost, stolen or they fall victim of other crime, or even is accused of committing a crime. We hope that you do not have to deal with such situations, but in case – at the beginning of your volunteer's stay in host country you should check the regulations concerning residency permits for people coming from your volunteer's homeland, whether there is any special rules of reporting crimes by foreigners, they are entitled to any special assistance (translators etc.) or you should rather be with them when there is a need to contact the police.

## 3.VIOLENCE

### 3.1. VOLUNTEERS FACING DANGERS.

First of all, the volunteer should always be informed about the most risky places and situations and preferably try to avoid them. However, as anyone can fall victim of physical violence, this is another situation you should be prepared for.

What do you do when your volunteer is attacked?

In the immediate situation:

- react quickly, without losing your mind. You should try to assuage the situation and separate the people involved. Remember about your own safety though – don't get into dangerous situations when you can't be sure whether you're able to solve them, rather ask for help instead. (other people around, calling the police)

Afterwards:

- if the involvement of authorities is needed you should help the volunteer go through all the formal steps of the procedure. Your organization can help you with that should you have any doubts or problems.
- Once the whole situation is dealt with in the technical and legal aspect it is important to re-

flect together about what happened. Can you identify the causes? Can you draw conclusions from the experience? Talk to your volunteer but remember that in some cases external help might be needed (sending organization, a mediator, a psychologist – if you see that the volunteer is challenged by the consequences of the incident it is better to ask for help)

### 3.2 SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Being a sensitive issue, the subject of sexual harassment happening in the volunteering context tends to be avoided. It is therefore even more important to remember that these situations are not as rare as they seem to be and the lack of official coverage is rather due to not reporting the cases (there can be various reasons for that: emotional struggling, victim shaming, protecting the oppressor).

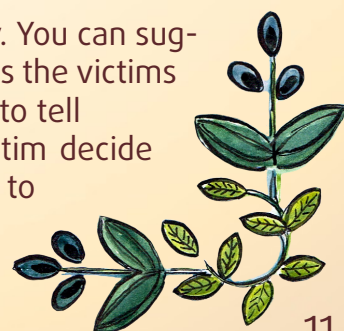
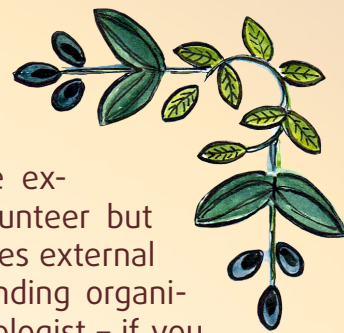
If such a situation takes place and the mentor is the first person told about it, a great responsibility is put on their shoulder. Not only do they have to look for a solution to the legal aspect of the case but more importantly they provide the necessary emotional support. In this place it is extremely important to mention that it is not the role of the mentor to substitute a therapist when one is needed. Don't be afraid to ask for help (without breaching your volunteers privacy of course) or suggest someone more suitable for this role. Still, the first supporter is you and dealing with such situations is emotionally exhausting both for the victims and those caring about them. In any situation mentors also need to inform the sending and/or the hosting organization, depending on each case, but always being mindful of your volunteers' privacy

What can you do?

- Listen. In the first conversation it is your presence that is needed

- Respect the privacy. You can suggest solutions but it is always the victims choice what to do and who to tell

- Act. Should the victim decide to report the situation, try to guide them through the steps. Find out about legal





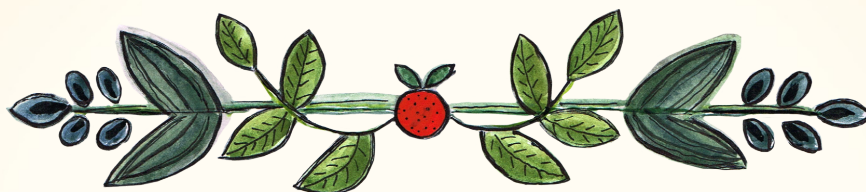
procedures but remember you don't have to do all the work yourself. Contact sending organization, or hosting organization or even the National Agency that should help the volunteers carry out the relevant procedures.

- Provide support. You don't have to do it yourself. If you see the volunteer needs to talk to someone else (or wants to talk to you but you don't feel competent) you can suggest the help of a psychologist. You look for support organizations and contact the sending organization in case of a language barrier.

- Report. Always remembering about the privacy of the particular person, it is good to provide a description of the situation and the solutions applies for future mentors and statistics.

## GENERAL ADVICE

Be aware that the situations mentioned above can be difficult for everyone involved. Try to provide support but don't be afraid to ask for help – it is good to challenge yourself but once you see you are not comfortable with your tasks anymore remember to take care of yourself. Communicate how you feel about the work you're doing – a clear conversation between the mentor, volunteer and the organization can help you find the solution that works for everyone.



## OTHER POSSIBLE CHALLENGES

Here we mention some other typical challenges, that may have already been mentioned in previous parts, but also some other aspects to keep in mind

**Emotional** (for example home sickness, romantic issues, loneliness): If the volunteer is going through emotional problems, the mentor should be available and act as a good listener. The mentor should provide the volunteer with some perspective on the problem, and try and encourage the volunteer to involve themselves in interesting activities to distract them (taking them to cultural events, to see a concert etc.).

**Technical** (for example language difficulties, disappointment with the project, lack of appropriate capacities, not being able to offer ideas to the project): If the volunteer is having technical problems, as a mentor you should work on building the confidence of the volunteer and

help him/her to believe in him/herself, mediate with the host organisation and project coordinator, share your skills and knowledge with him/her.

**Integrational** (for example not being accepted by the host community, rejection from the local community, negative social influences): If the volunteer is having difficulties in integrating, the mentor should include the volunteer in his local environment, inviting to family meals for example, or support the volunteer in networking and connect him/her with positive social circles, give an objective point of view to the volunteer with a balance between professional rules and friendly advice.



# HOW TO KEEP MYSELF MOTIVATED AS A MENTOR?



The motivation for a mentor is very important because mentors must assure that the volunteers are having a smooth path through their EVS. We have to think that mentoring is not an action where money is a motivation, because of this you have to find it in other points for keeping yourself motivated.

Keep in mind that you can participate at social events, activities, meetings that you like or that you find interesting. You can build friendships with others, so you can enjoy your time together, during your weekends and free days.

With the hosting organization is important also to have a great relation, it would be nice that the mentor will participate in all the social events that the hosting organization propose. (Not in the weekly activities).

Sometimes, you can improve your motivation teaching some aspects of your culture to the volunteers. In this cultural exchange, you can also be a part of the foreigners' cultures that the volunteers will experience.

Mentors can create new methods of training, like games, energizers, etc. This way, the volunteer/mentor relation will be closer, you will feel satisfaction with this and you would be more motivated to create more techniques.

In this point we can develop too a non-official "On arrival training" or "Midterm Meeting" where again the relation/motivation of the volunteer/mentor/hosting organization would be improved.





# HOW TO ASSESS MYSELF AS A MENTOR?

During your mentorship, you should always refer to the standards of being a mentor keeping in mind your role and task. And based on all the information you found in this toolkit try to assess yourself through self-questioning such as:

- Did I meet my goals?
- What did I accomplish?
- What impact do I have on my volunteer?
- Am I the mentor that I wish to have?

In order to help you with this assessment we provide you with 2 assessment tools that are not obligatory but more created to help you through your mentorship:

- A- Meeting reflection
- B- Mentor checklist

## A-MEETING REFLECTION:

After meeting your volunteer review the below questions, try to keep the questions in your mind to evaluate each of your meetings and to guarantee the maximum benefit out of these meetings; feel free to add as many question as you want and always remember that these tools are for self assessment and not mandatory except for your benefit:

- 1- Did I receive detailed information from the volunteer or just basic information?
- 2- Is he/she using my advices?
- 3- Does he/she feel comfortable with me?
- 4- Did I take in consideration the cultural differences between us?



## B- MENTOR CHECKLIST

While the meeting reflection tool can be a habit after each meeting, you can use the checklist tool whenever you feel you are ready to answer the questions and you need to answer them, and the same assessment can be repeated when you feel the need to.



# CHECKLIST



|                                   | QUESTION  | YES | NO |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----|----|
| COMMUNICATION                     | Does he/she call me?  |     |    |
|                                   | Am I communicating with the host organization when needed?              |     |    |
|                                   | Am I helping my volunteer with his language?                            |     |    |
|                                   | Are we meeting enough?  |     |    |
|                                   | Was I ready for the volunteer when they called me?                      |     |    |
| SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL FOLLOW UP | Do I know enough about my volunteer's cultural background?              |     |    |
|                                   | Do I know enough about my volunteer's dreams and goals?                 |     |    |
|                                   | Do I know enough about my volunteer's interest and hopes?               |     |    |
|                                   | Did I integrate my volunteer in my cultural environment?                |     |    |
|                                   | Do I know enough about my volunteer's work and organization activities? |     |    |
|                                   | Am I willing to cater to the needs of my volunteer?                     |     |    |
| PERSONAL BENEFITS                 | Did I learn anything from my volunteer (language, skills,...)?          |     |    |
|                                   | Do I enjoy being a mentor?  |     |    |
|                                   | Do I feel any pressure in my mentorship?                                |     |    |
|                                   | Does this experience have a positive impact on me?                      |     |    |
|                                   | Am I discovering something new in myself?                               |     |    |
|                                   | Is the experience meeting my expectation?                               |     |    |

Once you finish your assessment, you will be able to know how satisfied your job is or if you need to improve anything. In this case, try to talk clearly with your volunteer about his/her expectation and about your role. If you feel discouraged, you can always check chapter 7 for some ideas on how to motivated yourself as a mentor.

You can also try to find other mentors in your country or other countries and set regular meetings to support each other and share experiences.





# HOW TO GIVE FEEDBACK TO HOST ORGANISATION

## WHY IS YOUR FEEDBACK SO IMPORTANT?

As a mentor you work directly with both the receiving organisation and the volunteer. By doing so you often see two perspectives on the same situation which gives you the advantage over both parties involved, especially when some problems arise and your role is to mediate between them. Feedback as a way of communication is crucial to efficient cooperation and your input can considerably improve it.

## WHOSE FEEDBACK?

Both the volunteer and you will have opinions and feedback concerning the work you're all doing. It is important to remember that the volunteer's feedback and the mentor's feedback are not the same and when talking with the organisation you have to be careful to separate between the two. The volunteer can give feedback directly to the organisation or through you which makes it even more complex. Always be clear about what your opinion and their opinion are.

## HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

Feedback can be given in both formal and non-formal way. Formal includes written report writing or other methods agreed between you and the organisation while non-formal is the verbal communication. Remember that even the non-formal conversation still requires you to follow the established rules like confidentiality (we develop on that aspect in the next part)



## CONFIDENTIALITY

Always remember what you agreed on with the volunteer and respect their privacy. Talk about the problems only when you have permission to do so. Of course some situations might seem ambiguous and you will have to rely on your judgement but there are always methods of convincing the volunteer to speak up or let you communicate on their behalf rather than acting behind their back.

## COMMUNICATION WITH THE VOLUNTEER

It is your role to ask the right questions to help the volunteer put their experience into words and pass it to the organization. This way you can select the information to report effectively the volunteer's satisfaction with the learning process and their activities.



## COMMUNICATION WITH THE ORGANISATION

It is important to have regular meeting to be able to react quickly should any serious issue appear. This way you can keep track of the progress and be sure the work is going in the right direction. To ensure a clear view on the progress you might want to use a visual method. A table of progress

is a useful tool to supervise the carrying out of the steps planned beforehand.

If the feedback is negative it is not enough to point out the problems but also try to look for solutions – by communicating in a constructive way you can help improve the quality of cooperation instead of simply criticising it.







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