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FOR WOMEN**

# Supporting a Mentee who is Struggling to Commit

## Introduction

Mentees on the Mentoring Women in Business programme often face competing commitments and responsibilities. As women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries, they frequently juggle a wide range of demands and challenges, including significant caregiving responsibilities. Although we encourage only those who can fully commit to the programme to join, unexpected challenges may arise that affect their ability to participate.

As a mentor, you may encounter situations where your mentee is struggling to meet the agreed-upon commitment of two hours of meetings per month. This can be a challenging time for both of you, but with understanding and the right approach, you can help find a solution that works for both parties. If your mentee is not fulfilling her commitments, and regular communication is still ongoing, consider the following steps:

## Listen with empathy

Approach your mentee with kindness and openness to discuss her situation. Make it clear that your concern comes from a place of support, not judgment. By having this conversation mindfully, you can better understand the challenges she is facing, whether they are related to the mentoring relationship or external pressures. It's important to be mindful of her context, which may include limited access to resources, cultural differences in communication or business practices, or challenging operating environments. Provide a safe space for her to open up and communicate freely.

## Reflect on the situation

Take time to process what you've learned. Assess whether the issue is internal (such as challenges with communication, imposter syndrome or scheduling) or external (like poor infrastructure, responsibilities or financial stress). Use your professional experience to offer a fresh perspective or alternative approaches to the challenges she is facing. Remember, your role as a mentor is to guide her with the wisdom you've gained from your own experiences.



### **Respond with practical solutions**

Consider what resources you can share, such as articles, frameworks, or strategies that might help her manage the challenges more effectively. Discuss and support her to achievable goals to re-engage her in the mentoring process. For example, you might propose setting a recurring meeting time, shortening the meeting duration, or adjusting the frequency to better fit her schedule. Remind her of the remaining time on the programme and your commitment to helping her achieve her goals.

### **Inform the Mentoring Team**

If your mentee continues to struggle with commitment, update the Mentoring Team. Provide them with a detailed account of the situation and the steps you've taken to address it. The team can offer additional support and perspectives, helping to re-engage your mentee or, if necessary, establish deadlines and action plans.

### **Accept and adapt**

In some cases, despite your best efforts, disengagement may persist due to unavoidable circumstances. If this happens, after consulting with the Mentoring Team, it may be necessary to consider taking a short break or, in some cases, ending the relationship early. While these decisions are difficult, they are sometimes necessary to ensure that both you and your mentee can make the most of your time and efforts.

Supporting a mentee who is struggling to commit requires patience, understanding, and flexibility. By following these steps, you can help your mentee navigate her challenges and find a path forward that works for both of you.

