

## ‘Getting the Most Out of Your Mentor’

Seminar hosted by Fremantle Press on Saturday 23 October 2021

### Comments from participants:

This workshop helped the participants understand that the role of a mentor goes way beyond that of an editor, and is, possibly, more important than the role of an editor as it helps build the confidence of a writer as well as their abilities.

The mentor has navigated the difficult course of traditional publishing, has honed their craft to be able to produce great writing. Mentors know the pitfalls, can share their knowledge and experience and help the emerging writer take “shorts cuts” in a necessarily arduous and taxing process.

First drafts are weird and awkward. Writing involves criticism and revisionary. A spirit of openness is required, and also a willingness to sit in a place of uncertainty, a space of unknowing, a space of discovery. The mentor relationship is not editorial. The work considered may be raw and highly personal and there must be an appreciation that the mentee is “feeling her way”. The mentor asks, “What do you need?” and suggests reading/s that help the writer progress and learn. It’s OK for the mentee to seek clarification. It’s OK for the mentee to not accept all the advice, but they do need to consider it. The consideration of input from the mentor is a way for the mentee to develop their own intuition about their work and how to problem solve and move forward. The mentee needs to know that it is okay to show the mentor the work they would normally not show anyone.

### Some key questions for the mentee to consider:

- What is it I would like to get out of writing?
- If the voice in my story isn’t working, why?
- Is it my story to tell? If it is not, don’t tell it.

### Some key insights:

- Writing in the wilderness is hard – most writers are working in a vacuum of feedback.
- In a mentor relationship, a mentee describes their vision, and their mentor helps them to get there.
- Wanting to be traditionally published shows the intention to be professional and consistent, which is admirable.
- Mentors want to help mentees to be the best version of themselves.
- It’s a responsive relationship – and mentors learn from mentees.

One of the key takeaways from the seminar was the importance of clarifying the intent and direction of their project, so the writer can clearly articulate this with their mentor. Also staying open to keep improving their work and to regularly check in with themselves as a reader, as well as a writer, to strengthen their own unique voice in their work.

