

Talking Partners

Talking Partners (TP) is a co-mentoring program designed to help employees increase their self-awareness and improve judgment. Your TP is a zone where you can feel safe. It is the equivalent of your Training Partner (gym buddy), but for development. This is a person who cares about you and with whom you can speak openly about your worries and struggles. They also act as your second screen when making important decisions.

The Origins

Talking Partners started with our Co-CEOs Charlie Kim and Meghan Messenger. They found that in leadership roles, great decision making is of vital importance. At its heart, the Talking Partner program is a “decision-making system” and an emotional training ground. Two individuals get to know each others’ strengths and impediments, and can talk out frustrations and decisions in order to improve the decision-making process. Your TP helps you develop your self-awareness, and is your first practice ground for vulnerability, as well as giving and receiving feedback.

How it Works

Each TP meeting is organized around a framework: MEET, VENT, WORK

- MEET – Find a consistent time meet, ideally in the morning. Make this practice a daily ritual
- VENT – “Get the toxins out” – anything from your home life or work life is fair game for discussion. TP is a place which honors your anxieties and struggles as part of who you are. It also gives you a structure for reducing the hold of negative thinking on your attention.
- WORK – After you vent, get to work. TPs are expected to push each other for greatness and help each other with decision making in their work. Honest feedback is critical between TPs.




Logistics

- Pick one person. Commit to trying to TP together for 1 month and meet at a consistent time daily.
- To kick off, suggest pairings for your organization and then let people reassess after 1 month.
- Follow the Meet, Vent, Work framework. In the beginning, you might just focus on the meet and vent.
- TIPS:
 - If you are on the more “arrogant” side, we recommend partnering with someone on the more “insecure” side. And vice versa.
 - It’s ideal if Talking Partners can co-own something together. It could be a culture event or core business.



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Talking Partners: Lessons Learned

	Mistake		Lesson Learned
Meet 	Only meet during "scheduled" TP Sessions	▶	Observe each other whenever possible (breakfast, shared work space, workout)
Vent 	Skip vent and go straight to work at hand	▶	Recognize when each other is on "emotional tilt" and talk out
	Coddling – say what is easy vs getting to truth (reality of situation)	▶	Call out the elephant in the room
	Wait for TP sessions to share thoughts/feedback	▶	Share in real time, wherever you are
Work 	Spend all time venting; no action	▶	Get to a decision (even if decision is to make no decision now)
	Coming in on Monday not having thought about upcoming week	▶	Discipline on Friday and Monday – reflect on week, plan on future week
	Not coaching each other	▶	Use TP as co-mentorship

