

# Creativity in Mentoring: Developing Innovation & Adaptive Thinking

---



This resource is designed to help mentors and mentees build creativity as a professional skill. In a field as dynamic and nuanced as aesthetic plastic surgery, creative thinking isn't just "nice to have" - it's essential for innovation, adaptability, and solving real-world clinical challenges. Mentorship can (and should) foster that creativity.

## **WHY CREATIVITY MATTERS IN MENTORSHIP**

In surgery, creativity isn't about improvising without a plan - it's about being able to:

- Adapt confidently when things don't go exactly as expected
- Approach patient challenges with fresh thinking
- Explore new techniques and technologies
- Develop original research, presentations, or educational approaches

In mentorship, creativity also strengthens the relationship itself - making it more engaging, flexible, and personally tailored.

## **CREATIVITY AS A PROFESSIONAL SKILL**

Creativity is not limited to artistic pursuits. In a mentoring context, it includes:

- Innovative problem-solving
- Curiosity-driven learning
- Challenging assumptions
- Building resilience through flexibility
- Approaching challenges with confidence and options

Just like surgical precision or communication, creativity is a muscle that can be developed.

## **FOR MENTORS; HOW TO FOSTER CREATIVITY**

Mentors can create a space where curiosity, exploration, and challenge are welcomed.

### **Encourage Reflective Problem-Solving**

- Instead of giving the answer, ask: "What are some ways you might approach that?"
- Use open-ended questions to promote independent thinking.

### **Share “How I Figured It Out” Stories**

- Talk about a time when you had to be resourceful - how you navigated an unexpected surgical issue, a difficult patient situation, or an ethical dilemma.

### **Invite Innovation**

- Ask mentees to bring new ideas: “What are you reading about that excites you?” or “What have you seen in emerging techniques?”

### **Co-Learn Something New**

- Attend a webinar together and debrief.
- Choose a journal article neither of you have read before and explore it.

## **FOR MENTEES: HOW TO DEVELOP CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS**

Creativity is a valuable part of your identity as a future surgeon - it helps you think critically, adapt, and grow into your own practice style.

### **Stay Curious**

- Ask “Why?” and “What if?” during your mentor sessions.
- Don’t be afraid to share an unconventional idea or challenge a standard assumption (respectfully).

### **Build Your Own Problem-Solving Toolkit**

- Use reflection logs to document how you’ve approached complex patient or learning situations.
- Explore different techniques for similar procedures and weigh the pros and cons.

### **Be Open to Experimentation**

- Try different ways of learning (e.g., visual diagrams, case simulations, discussion-based learning).
- Lead part of a mentoring session (e.g., present a case, propose a topic).

## ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY IN MENTORSHIP

Activity	Purpose	Who Leads
Case study swap – mentor and mentee both bring a complex case and discuss approaches	Develop adaptive clinical thinking	Both
Reverse mentoring moment – mentee teaches mentor something new (e.g., digital tools, social media use, new technique from training)	Empower mentee, promote mutual respect	Mentee
“What would you do?” dilemmas – discuss ethical or surgical grey areas	Encourage flexible thinking	Mentor
Joint innovation challenge – brainstorm ideas to improve a patient experience, clinic workflow, or training process	Foster collaboration and creativity	Both

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Creativity is not a soft skill - it's a **core skill** for surgeons and mentors in a changing world. It helps us:

- Handle complexity with calmness
- Think flexibly and ethically
- Lead with curiosity and confidence

Mentorship should not just pass on knowledge - it should inspire **new ways of thinking**, both in and beyond the operating room.

Let creativity be part of your mentoring journey - and part of how you shape the future of aesthetic plastic surgery.