

# GEM Program Mentor Checklist

## Creating Psychological Safety in Virtual Mentoring Sessions

Psychological safety is the foundation of an effective mentoring relationship — especially online. Use this checklist to set up each session so your mentees feel genuinely welcome, comfortable to share, and ready to do their best thinking. Based on Sarah Weiler's 12 Ways to Create Psychological Safety on Zoom.

### OPENING THE SESSION (MENTOR FACILITATED)

- Welcome your mentees by name**  
A simple, warm acknowledgement sets the tone immediately.
- Introduce yourselves and your role as mentors – include one vulnerable share**  
Model openness and vulnerability and support of your co-mentor.
- Start with a check-in**  
Ask how they're arriving to the call. Give space to clear anything on their mind before diving in. Try: 'One word for how you're feeling right now?' or 'Anything you need to put down before we start?'
- Check physical comfort**  
Let them know if there's a break planned, and that they can move, make a drink, or step away if needed.
- Revisit the agreed whole group norms**  
As facilitated by NAWO in the GEM Onboarding Session — briefly restate the shared norms from the whole group session, then invite any additional agreements or norms your group wants to add for your breakout.
- Confirm how you'll work today**  
Cover timing, cameras, and whether notes will be kept. Remind them it's always an invitation — not a demand — to share.

### DURING THE SESSION

- Create space — don't rush**  
Silence is okay. Let your mentees think. Resist the urge to fill every pause.
- Build togetherness visually**  
Use a thumbs up, hand on heart, or a nod to show you're with them — especially if one of you is muted.
- Manage speaking time with care**  
Signal gently when time is running short rather than cutting off mid-thought.
- Have a backup plan for tech issues**  
Know how you'll reconnect if someone drops out (e.g. phone call, WhatsApp, SMS).
- Respect privacy moments**  
If your mentees seem hesitant to speak freely, offer to shift to chat or revisit the topic another time.

### CLOSING THE SESSION

- Finish on time — and offer a soft exit**  
Allow 5–10 minutes for natural wrap-up or any off-agenda questions.
- Close with reflection**  
Try: 'What's one thing you're taking away from today?' This honours the time and anchors the learning.
- Confirm next steps and next meeting**  
Send a brief follow-up note with any actions and the date of your next session.

### Mentor reflection - After each session, ask yourself:

*Did our mentees seem at ease? Was there anything we could do to make it easier for them?  
How effectively did we co-mentor? What will we try differently next time?*