

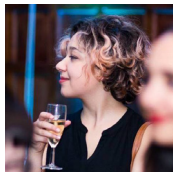
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# It’s a match! How Carl and Khazna made it work

Playwright Carl Miller and Oxford JLU ambassador / up-and-coming fiction writer Khazna Chami first met on the Just Like Us mentoring programme in June 2017, and they formed a successful mentoring relationship over a year. How did they approach the Just Like Us mentoring programme, and what did they achieve through it?



**Carl**  
Mentor



**Khazna**  
Mentee

## What have you both gained from being in a mentoring relationship?

**Khazna, mentee**

We’ve both gained the opportunity to consider ourselves and our work in a new context. We’ve come from different backgrounds, and of course, are at entirely different stages. Being in regular contact and really listening to someone whose life is so different from your own, but having goals, interests and traits, in common, gives us both the opportunity to reflect and assess our own opinions and plans. Plus, the mentoring relationship is a chance to find a connection in your field who you would never have known otherwise – a chance to experience something really meaningful and unique.

**Carl, mentor**

I’ve met an interesting new person! I’ve learned about Khazna’s experience and perspectives and had the opportunity to share things that I think might be useful with someone who has a huge amount to offer the world.

## What should excite mentors and mentees about their own roles?

**Khazna, mentee**

For mentors, the opportunity to help someone through, what are probably the first stages in their career, and to exchange wisdom and enthusiasm with them.

For mentees, the opportunity to meet and bond with someone who is more experienced than you – whether that experience is in the same field, general knowledge about being in the world of work, or navigating life whilst holding some of the values or traits the two of you share.

**Carl, mentor**

For mentors, the chance to engage in a meaningful way with someone who is at a different stage in her life and career – and the opportunity that gives to reflect on my own choices and paths taken (or not!) For me it was a particular benefit to be paired with someone whose background is very different from mine.

For mentees, I hope the chance to think about what they want to do and who they want to be in a less pressured and goal-oriented way than may be possible in other contexts.

## During your first conversation, how did you choose what you wanted to do?

**Khazna, mentee**

We used the handbook given to us by JLU to see what was suggested for the mentoring relationship, including how often we wanted to meet, what sorts of things we might want to discuss, and how we were to have a healthy and productive mentoring relationship. After that, we decided on a lot of what we wanted to do through dialogue: we discussed where I was in terms of writing at the time, what other commitments I had, and what he thought might be productive.

**Carl, mentor**

We used the handbook as prompts, but it was mainly about seeing what Khazna’s interests and concerns were. Being a writer does not have a set career structure, so a lot of what we have explored are ways to create an appropriate, independent path.

## What do you think the ‘style’ of your mentoring relationship was, and why did it work for you?

**Khazna, mentee**

I think that our mentoring relationship was adaptive, stable, and balanced. We mostly made goals for the short-term, and those depended greatly on what I’d been working on within the preceding weeks. I think that this worked for us because writing does need to be flexible: often, you can be most creative by chasing ideas down rabbit-holes, improving where you notice weaknesses, and putting parts of your work together in new and exciting ways. It was stable because we met on a regular basis (roughly every 6-9 weeks). Stability also came from the fact that Carl could trust me to be open about how work had been, and to work on writing in-between meetings; I could trust him to listen to me, and to respect me and my work. This is also where the balance came from. I’d also add that our mentoring relationship was quite informal and reciprocal: we could talk about things other than our work, such as interesting things we’d seen in our work and lives, how difficult it can be to feel confident as a writer, and how it can be a challenge to balance writing and other priorities.

**Carl, mentor**

I hope it was flexible yet structured, informal but not casual. I felt that we were both committed to making it more than simply a diary date, so that we moved on between each meeting, but the aims we agreed were open for change as circumstances required.

*This is an edited version of Carl and Khazna’s Q&A. The full version has been emailed to mentors and mentees, and is available from Just Like Us ([taz.rasul@justlikeus.org](mailto:taz.rasul@justlikeus.org))*