I had just started my social work program and one of the requirements was that I go to an internship two days a week. One day a week, I would sit down for a one-on-one meeting with the person who was supervising me.

So that first week I show up, excited and nervous, and I sit down for a one-on-one. And there was a little bit of an awkward silence in the beginning and finally the person supervising me said, *where's your agenda?*

And I said, *where's my agenda? Where's your agenda?*

We had a good laugh about it.

As it turns out I was the one who was supposed to bring the agenda to these meetings so I adjusted accordingly.

Now that relationship is different between a supervisor and an employee. You absolutely want to make sure that your staff has input into what's going to be on the agenda, but you don't want them to be solely responsible.

As a supervisor, there are going to be items that you need to make sure are discussed and talked about during these one-on-ones. You need to come up with a system with your staff so that both of you can contribute to the agenda.

Some weeks you're going to have more items. Other weeks, your staff is going to have more items.

You want to make sure in the end it all sort of comes out about 50/50 where you both have equal voice into what's being discussed in your one-on-ones.

I suggest having some sort of shared document that both of you can contribute to and read and add to as the weeks go on.

You don't need to wait until the day before. You shouldn't wait until the day before to come up with an agenda. As things pop up for each of you, you can go ahead and add it onto the agenda and then make sure you discuss it during the meetings.

But agendas are not the only thing that are required to successfully prepare for an effective one-on-one meeting. Let's talk about what some of those other things are.

In terms of logistics, you want to make sure that all that stuff is taken care of ahead of time.

I used to work at a place that had a couple of small meeting rooms. No matter how many times you confirmed and signed up and made sure you had the room inevitably about 8 times out of 10 you'd show up to the room and someone else would be in there.

It happens.

Some organizations are a little bit more organized around things like that, but do your best to control it. You want to make sure that the logistics are in place, that the meeting place your meeting at is available and it's yours and it's confidential and quiet.

If you generally meet at a coffee shop, for example, you want to make sure it's open the day that you're meeting or the time that you're meeting.

Plan ahead for things like that.

If you do outside meetings and you see that the weather's lousy, prepare a plan B ahead of time. Make sure all those logistics are taken care of. If there are documents that need to be gone over or signed make sure you have them available.

Use the time within the meeting as valuably as possible (if that's a word).

Do all of the prep before you get to the actual meeting. You have the agenda as we've already touched upon. You also want to make sure that you are sending ahead of time any information that is going to inform the discussion you're about to have.

Lots of people- myself included- have trouble thinking on their feet. If you are expecting a decision and the person is only receiving the information at the moment and you're asking them to come to a decision, they might not always make the best decision they can because they haven't had ample time to think about it ahead of time.

As much as you're able, send information ahead of time. If it's a policy, if it's a situation, if there are some client notes you want to go over depending on what type of work you do, include that in the agenda and what you are sending out ahead of time so the person knows what to expect when they walk into that meeting.

They can come prepared with good thoughts and good questions.

The one thing we don't always think about but always shows up whether we think about it or not is our energy in that meeting. Sometimes we think that we're faking it or we think people won't notice. Sometimes they will but in a lot of cases our energy speaks for us.

You want to make sure as much as you're able to control it that you are not running from back to back to back to back meetings. Instead, leave a buffer in between so you can take a minute, take a deep breath and think about what you want to accomplish in that meeting. Get yourself in a good headspace.

If you've had a tough morning and there are a million other things on your mind, take a minute to clear it out. Take that deep breath and welcome your staff to that meeting with a smile on your face, with a smile in your voice.

If they walk in and you're busy typing and you don't even look up and say, 'oh, hey just take a seat. I'll be with you in a minute.'

That's sending a type of energy and a type of message to your staff that you're not necessarily ready, that you're not necessarily focused, and that you're not necessarily excited that they're there. You're showing them that you are preoccupied with something else.

As best you're able, welcome them with a smile on your face.Let them know that you're really happy to see them and that you're completely focused on the meeting ahead.

Okay, let's go back to that agenda because it is really important to keep you on track.

Sharing the responsibility not just of what goes on the agenda but how you go through it. You're not always the one who's going to lead the discussion particularly on items when your staff has put something on the agenda. You want to give them space not always just to respond to you but also to be leading those discussions and conversations.

Make sure you're sharing the responsibility. Talking should be at least 50/50, but if it's out of balance, it should be way more talking on your staff's part than yours.

Again, make sure you're sharing any necessary information ahead of time and make sure you're leaving enough time.

You should have a regular standing meeting that might be an hour or 45 minutes depending on the person but if you're looking at the agenda and you see that there's a lot of stuff or maybe just one really big thing on there, you want to check in with your staff and see if you're able to add a little bit of time on to the meeting.

On the flip side, if you notice it's a pretty light agenda you might want to ask your staff if they want to reduce the time just this once. The balance of flexibility and focus is a challenging one. You want to make sure that you're getting through what you need to get through and you have some space for things that just pop up.

You're going to have to play around with that. It's situational. It's always going to be a little bit different depending on the circumstances, but think about where you're maybe being too flexible or not flexible enough and how you can adjust to better serve your staff.

You need to come up with a system for how to capture what happened in the meeting. This should be in a standing place that both of you can access. Just emailing back and forth isn't always the best way. A lot of times emails get lost in the shuffle. Figure out whatever drive or system you use.

If you're an organization that uses things like Slack or Asana or Trello- if you don't know what I'm talking about, it means you don't use it- those are types of platforms you can use to organize tasks find what works for both of you and capture what you are discussing and deciding in these meetings, so you both can always go back and look at it.

Include the resources you've shared.

They might be fresh in your mind at the moment, but if six months down the road you want to go back to that meeting and you're talking about some document you were discussing but the document is not there, you may have a better memory than I do, but I know for sure I likely would not remember what we were talking about, so include those documents. Focus on outcomes.

A lot of times on the agenda, we just talk about what the items on the agenda are. Those are important of course, but just like when you're taking a course or you're taking a training or a workshop and at the very beginning they say these are the objectives. This is what we're going to accomplish. It's a great thing to put on your agendas. This is what we're trying to accomplish.

At the end of the meeting you can check in to see if you've accomplished it. If not, what do you need to do to get there next time?

Give your staff time to think and prepare. Give yourself time to think and prepare.

If you're somebody who meditates or whatever it is that you do to get yourself in a place where you are focused and your energy is right, do that.

It doesn't have to look like this sitting on a desk closing your eyes and meditating with your legs crossed. Whatever the version is for you, get yourself in a good mental state.

Make sure you're meeting in a good physical state, so your staff feels welcome and comfortable to make the most out of that meeting time.

Remember how you prepare for, and how you follow up from a meeting are just as important as how you lead it.

Make sure you are doing so in a way that is effective.