

Mentoring Skills

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On the following pages are specific skills that can be used as part of the mentoring relationship, and allow mentors to feel confident & successful as they fulfill their expectations & the goals of their mentees. These skills involve:

- Increasing interpersonal communication between yourself and your mentee
- Encouraging listening to your mentee
- Discovering commonality and connection between you and your mentee
- Increasing the level of trust and communication between you and your mentee
- Encouraging your mentee to develop alternative solutions
- Increasing the level of participation and personal responsibility of mentee

Giving Advice . . . one of the important components of mentoring

It is easy for a mentor to fall into the trap of having all the answers. Dispensing information is often required; it's quick and easy and may make you feel good about yourself as a mentor. But if you only give advice, much of it fails to stick.

The balancing act involves coaching your mentee to discover insight on her/his own and also to give advice when you believe it is most needed.

Suggestions for Giving Advice

1. Give advice only when your mentee has done some preliminary thinking on his/her own, and only after you have listened carefully and thoroughly understand the issue at hand. Don't jump at the chance to provide your insight too early in the conversation.
2. Don't give advice only when your mentee sees you as the "answer person" who has the golden piece of information. You both may get very used to the idea of his/her asking and you answering.
3. Give advice when your mentee ask for and needs it. One of the most frustrating mentor responses to the question, "What do you think I should do?" is, "What do you think you should do?" It often feels manipulative to the mentee; you apparently have an opinion but for the sake of mentoring, you are withholding it.
4. Provide direction and give advice when your mentee is stuck. Then ask: "How do you think my advice would apply to your situation?" The goal is for the mentee to make the outcome his/her own. Your advice is meant only to get him/her "unstuck."
5. Try telling a story which is a relevant example from your career or lifetime experience. You may feel that telling a story would be interesting and appropriate and that it would help illustrate a possible path for the mentee.

Handled well, giving of advice can be your most appropriate mentoring action!

Mentor Benefits & Roles

Who is a mentor?

A mentor is a trusted and experienced advisor who has a direct interest in the development and education of a less experienced individual. A mentor is that person who achieves a one-to-one developmental relationship with a learner, and one whom the learner identifies as having enabled personal growth to take place.

The relationship between the mentor and mentee is unique. The mentor assumes numerous roles, while contributing to a sustaining relationship of shared interests and goals. A mentor makes a commitment to an assigned mentee to help her or him grow into the organization's culture and become a productive and effective organization member. A person can never have too many mentors. As a faculty member, you might have several formal and informal mentors at the same time.

Qualities of a good mentor:

- Considered a role model in his/her position or area
- Committed to the mentoring process
- Responds to individual circumstances
- Encourages and motivates others
- Creates a continuous learning environment
- Has the respect of others at the work place
- Commits time to be a mentor
- Possesses the knowledge and influence needed to be a mentor
- Willing to share knowledge
- Possesses good interpersonal communication skills

Benefits of participating in the program for a mentor:

- Gain increased respect and recognition from others in the work place as individuals who have the ability to identify, encourage, and promote other employees
- Extend your network to other mentors and mentees
- Contribute to the development of new employees
- Experience professional and personal growth and renewal
- Contribute toward increasing the mentee's enthusiasm about being an employee
- Use or develop additional skills not required in current position
- Keep you sharp and encourages creativity
- Provide a window to "get by giving"
- Enhance your value to others

A mentor's general role may include, but is not limited to:

Advisor: Provide mentee with useful information about the work place; offer mentee an avenue for social and emotional support during his/her transition into the work place; familiarize mentee with the numerous sources and resources located throughout the community.

Role model: Teach mentee how to succeed in the work place by modeling how individuals in senior positions conduct themselves and interact with others.

Coach: Advise mentee on how to accomplish his/her goals and provide feedback. Help the mentee develop alternatives to address work-related problems or create learning opportunities. Teach the mentee organizational and professional skills and help "decode" the Work place culture; create an atmosphere where mentees can learn from their own and each other's experiences, mistakes, and successes as well as from their mentors' experiences.

Supporter: Encourage the participation of the mentee on committees to increase visibility; -enhance the mentee's self-esteem through supportive, nonjudgmental discussions and "pep talk"

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A mentor's specific role may include, but is not limited to:

- Recognize and evaluate what you can offer, keeping in mind that you should not expect yourself to fulfill every mentoring function
- Clarify expectations with your mentee about the extent to which you will offer guidance concerning personal as well as professional issues such as advice about how to balance family and career responsibilities
- Give constructive feedback (as well as praise) when warranted but present it with specific suggestions for improvement
- Help new faculty learn what kinds of available institutional support they should seek in order to further their own career development - such as faculty development funds

- Take time to be available to your mentee (can keep in contact by dropping by, calling, sending e-mail, or inviting your mentee to lunch); ask questions and to read proposals and papers, and for periodic reviews of progress; to constructively criticize errors and to recognize and praise excellence
- Tell your mentee if he/she asks for too little - or too much - of your time
- Maintain confidentiality
- Discuss with the mentee the "rules" of the department or team
- Advise on tenure and promotion requirements and processes
- Provide advice on Work place and department/team policies
- Suggest strategies for effective teaching, grading, and writing grant proposals
- Propose effective ways of interacting with students and colleagues
- Help sort out priorities: budgeting time, publications, teaching, obtaining appropriate resources, setting up a lab or experimental work if appropriate, committees
- Suggest how to say "no" to certain demands on his/her time
- Provide social support, act as an advocate for the new faculty member
- Introduce him/her to colleagues from other departments
- Explain the written and unwritten rules of the Work place
- Discuss research, publication, and presentations at conferences

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Mentee Benefits & Responsibilities

The Organization has a strong interest in seeing that each new faculty member realizes his/her full potential. We want to do whatever it takes to retain and advance all new faculty members, both in his/her own interest as well as in that of the department/team and the Work place community. Each and every department/team has its own culture, a system with distinct structural features, role relations, informal system dynamics and environmental stresses and strains. New faculty members are not left to discover this culture and navigate in it alone.

Research suggests that new faculty who has the help of a mentor perform better both as teachers and as researchers. And the department/team and Work place is enriched and strengthened also. After all, mentoring is the socialization of faculty members learning the rules of academe, involving colleagues who are role models, consultants, advisors and sponsors for their peers.

Although all new faculties have responsibility for their own growth and success, having a mentor offers an avenue to become acclimated more quickly to the Organization culture. The effectiveness of having a mentoring relationship depends on the active participation of the mentee as well as the mentor.

Benefits for a new faculty member in having a mentor:

- Expand your view of the Work place
- Receive honest and informal feedback
- Receive advice on how to balance teaching, research, and other responsibilities and set professional priorities
- Obtain knowledge of informal rules for advancement (as well as political and substantive pitfalls to be avoided)
- Obtain knowledge of skills for showcasing one's own work
- Understand how to build a circle of friends and contacts both within and outside one's department or team
- Provide a perspective on long-term career planning
- Connect you closer to the Work place and to other employees
- Increase communication about what is happening in other areas of the Work place
- Expand growth in your sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness
- Provide an outlet to discuss concerns
- Increase your value to the work place
- Learn to cope with the formal and informal structure of the Work place
- Provide a successful and productive integration to the Work place

Mentee responsibilities:

- Meet regularly with the mentor
- Maintain confidentiality
- Keep yourself informed in regard to the requirements for tenure and promotion and your progress toward meeting those requirements
- Ask for and give feedback
- Take responsibility for own growth and success
- Follow through on referrals from mentor to appropriate office for specific information
- Listen actively
- Ask your mentor for guidance and assistance whenever it is needed
- Present needs in an articulate way

Phases of Mentoring Relationships

Phase	Description
Building Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Mentor and mentee become acquainted and informally clarify their common interests, shared values, and professional goals-Mentoring interaction fosters mutual interest and enthusiasm-Mentor and mentee establish rapport & trust with each other-Mentee imagines mentor will support him/her in a significant way-Mentor begins to visualize mentee as cacheable, enjoyable to work with, someone with potential
Developing Common Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Mentor and mentee communicate initial expectations and agree upon some common procedures and expectations as a starting point-Goals and expected outcomes of the mentoring relationship are developed by the mentor and mentee together
Developing Mentee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Gradually, needs are fulfilled. Objectives are met. Professional growth takes place. New challenges are presented and achieved-Both parties serve their maximum range of functions in their roles-Expectations are reinforced or modified through discovery of the real value of the relationship-Satisfaction and mutual exchange are at their peak-Mutual confidence develops between the mentor and mentee
Ending Formal Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-The relationship and its functions change due to personal or organizational shifts-There is a sense of loss, combined with excitement about new directions-Contact frequency decreases-Since developmental tasks have changed for both parties, the relationship either evolves a new form or dissolves-The individuals redefine their relationship as colleagues, peers, and/or friends

There are several key points to take away from the above:

1. Clarifying expectations involves:
 - Determining the frequency of contact, the availability, and the accessibility of the mentor and mentee
 - The amount and kind of support that are needed by the mentee or that can be provided by the mentor
 - The various roles the mentor finds comfortable.
2. The mentor and the mentee need to anticipate, communicate, and manage the challenges inherent in these phases.
3. Know that these phases are part of the cycle, and can help both parties avoid personalizing "failures."
4. A single mentor is highly unlikely to meet all the mentee's needs.
5. The mentee and mentor both have developmental needs that can be met in the relationship. If these needs are not complementary, interaction can be frustrated.
6. Ending the formal relationship involves the mentor and mentee planning for and talking about this, evaluating the process and their accomplishments, discussing future options (more formal relationship, ongoing mentoring relationship, friendship).
7. The greatest challenges to a mentoring relationship are finding time and energy, selecting goals/objectives, keeping momentum going, and giving effective feedback.

The Mentoring Process

Check	Mentor	Mentee
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matching of mentor and new faculty member by department/team • Matching can occur before new faculty member arrives on Organization and mentor can contact to ask how to help make the transition easier or answer any questions 	
	Call or email mentee to set up first meeting after his/her arrival on Organization	Respond to mentor's request to meet
	Share information about background, professional experiences, and satisfactions. Include information about previous mentoring experiences, either as a mentor or mentee.	Share information about your background, your needs and values, and your aspirations
	Informally clarify common interests, shared work values	Informally clarify common interests, shared work values
	Help mentee clarify goals	Discuss goals to achieve your needs and aspirations
	Set up a schedule with your mentee for regular meetings	Set goals for yourself, and follow through on them. Don't be afraid to raise your expectations or redefine

	and feedback sessions. Be sure to agree on frequency and times, and stick to them.	your goals as part of the ongoing process
	Compile a list of activities with mentee which meet mutual goals	With your mentor, decide what steps will need to be taken to achieve your goals
	Remember to both talk and listen	Remember to both listen and talk
	Brush up on your communication and other skills and always remember to take the mentee seriously	Be receptive to feedback and coaching Feedback should be perceived as an opportunity for growth
	Be sensitive to gender and cross-cultural differences	Pay attention to changes in your life or attitudes that may call for updating your goals and expected outcomes

Mentor Tips -- Research shows that effective mentoring can be done in as little as two hours each month:

- Meet over breakfast or lunch. You have to eat sometime.
- Have your mentee attend a meeting with you.
- Have your mentee help you on a project.
- Introduce your mentee to others.
- Recommend other resources to your mentee.

Mentee Tips -- How to maintain your mentoring relationship:

- Maintain regular contact.
- Respect your mentor's time.
- Internalize and apply what you learn.
- Follow through.
- Show appreciation.
- Give back.

Types of Questions to Consider Discussing

The Trust Factor

No longer based on the leader-follower hierarchy, mentoring is becoming a two-way relationship where both parties learn, share, question, challenge, and change. The foundation of these growth-enhancing activities is a relationship of mutual trust. Trust can be built in some or all of the following five key areas:

- **Commonality:** we seek the common ground of shared experience as a first step in understanding one another and as a basis for communication. This could include common background, interests, opinions, values, people, or goals.

- **Concern:** there must be an honest commitment to and interest in the other person. This is best demonstrated by devoting time and by being a sincere, active listener.
- **Consistency:** this means being dependable in who we are and what we do. It can be experienced within the mentoring relationship and also observed in dealings with others.
- **Competence:** individual skills and gifts are identified, evaluated and shared with each other. Synergy is developed through sharing insights and new ideas. Individual egos are put aside as help is freely requested and given.
- **Confidentiality:** respect for confidentiality must be given while maintaining a careful balance with individual values. These expectations must be established early in the relationship and reestablished as situations present themselves. Define clear boundaries, since it can be difficult to recover from failure to deliver on expectations

Resist the temptation to project your own feelings about similar experiences on your mentee. Don't try to solve problems for the mentee. Help him/her develop alternative solutions with strengths and weaknesses of each. Being an effective listener means listening non-defensively:

- Having a willingness to hear what you might not like
- Not rejecting other's ideas just because you disagree with them
- Trying to grasp how ideas make sense to someone else even when they don't to you
- Resisting the urge to talk or interrupt the speaker
- Not debating the speaker silently in your mind while he/she is talking
- Believing there is usually more than one way of looking at things
- Believing there are far fewer "facts" and far more uncertainties and questions to be explored
- Valuing the exchange of ideas more than ideas themselves
- Knowing that if you don't listen, further communication is rather futile

Use "empathy not sympathy", when listening to your mentee. Sympathy is essentially comparing your experience with another's: "Yes, I felt that way, too, and let me tell you about it . . ." Empathy means "walking in another's shoes," going with their thinking and feeling in a nonjudgmental way. In demonstrating true empathy, you have to get your own ego out of the way; you may have to listen to ideas or feelings that you do not agree with.

Mentoring Language . . . the value and power of dialogue

Dialogue creates a pathway and a safety zone for an open conversation in which both mentor and mentee learn. Effective dialogue requires emotional safety for all participants; there must be no negative outcomes for expressing a point of view honestly and candidly. Introducing dialogue into a mentoring relationship can lead to profound, positive changes

in the nature of the relationship. Openness, trust, willingness, and support are dramatically enhanced when open dialogue exists.

Questioning tends to open people up. It stimulates learning, creativity, and understanding. It allows people to own their own ideas from the beginning. On the other hand, telling tends to control conversation, shuts off the flow of ideas, and may trigger combativeness or other forms of self-protection. Effective questions are effective because they accomplish several things for both people:

- They demonstrate a willingness on the part of the questioner to listen for the answer
- They demonstrate respect for the individual
- They help people discover their own answers, rather than waiting for an expert
- They clarify direction, purpose, expectations, and goals, which are necessary conditions to create alignment across the mentoring relationship
- They solicit people's ideas, input, and recommendations, which creates a significantly higher level of participation and involvement
- They help people understand the roles they play in the problems that exist and in achieving improved results
- They teach people to contemplate their thinking processes
- They focus people's attention on the future, not on the past, and on discovering solutions, not on staying stuck in problems

Therefore, effective questions must be:

- Open-ended rather than close-ended (cannot be answered simply with "yes" or "no")
- Placed appropriately in the dialogue to clarify, illuminate, and draw out
- Authentic, coming from a sincere desire to learn
- Followed by (sometimes deafening) silence, to demonstrate the mentor's sincere intention to listen
- Supportive in tone, to minimize the possibility of triggering people's defensive reactions (total communication is 7% spoken words, 38% tone of voice, and 55% body language)

Mentoring Language . . . sample problem-solving questions

What do you think about this idea?
What do you think is important?
How would you solve this?
If you were in my shoes, what would you do?
What other factors should we be considering?
In your opinion, why is this approach going to work?
What do you see as the obstacles we face?

Global

How are things going?
What are your goals?
What are you trying to accomplish?

Problem Identification

What results have you achieved so far?
Where are you stuck?
What kinds of problems are you encountering?
Why do you think that happened?

Options & Solutions

What solutions have you attempted?
What do you see as your options?
Do you want input from me?

Planning

What is your "go forward" plan?
How can you apply what you've learned to your job?
Who else would benefit from knowing this?

Support

What can I do to better support you?
Whose support do you need?
Would it be helpful to talk about this again?

Four-Step Questioning Approach

Step #1: Goals

What would you like to discuss?
What would you like to achieve?
What would you like from (to achieve in) this conversation?
What would need to happen for you to walk away feeling that this time was well spent?
If I could grant you a wish for this conversation, what would it be?
What would you like to be different when you leave this conversation?
What would you like to happen that is not happening now, or what would you like not to happen?
What outcome would you like from this conversation?
Is that realistic?
Can we do that in the time we have available?
Will that be of real value to you?

Step #2: Reality

What is happening at the moment?
How do you know that this is accurate?
When does this happen?
How often does this happen? Be precise if possible.
What effect does this have?
How have you verified, or would you verify, that that is so?
What other factors are relevant?
Who else is relevant?
What is their perception of the situation?
What have you tried so far?

Step #3: Options

What could you do to change the situation?
What alternatives are there to that approach?
What possibilities for action do you see? Do not worry about whether they are realistic at this stage.
What approach/actions have you seen used, or used yourself, in similar circumstances?
Who might be able to help?
Would you like suggestions from me?
Which options do you like the most?
What are the benefits and pitfalls of these options?
Which options are of interest to you?
Rate from 1-10 your interest level in/the practicality of each of these options.
Would you like to choose an option to act on?

Step #4: Wrap-up

What are the next steps?
Precisely when will you take them?
What might get in the way?
Do you need to log the steps in your journal?
What support do you need?
How and when will you enlist that support?

Giving & Receiving Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback are the most important skills in the mentoring role. If done well it can help to develop an open and trusting relationship which benefits both parties. If done badly or not at all it encourages attacking and defensive behavior and causes people to take up positions from which it is then difficult to move them.

The three main forms of feedback are:

1. Summarizing: allows thought collection on both sides, develops control, allows for objections and misunderstandings to be clarified:

- Let me summarize our discussion so far.

- Let me summarize what I have just said.

2. Clarifying: demonstrates your good intentions, should show that you are listening, shows interest and allows for correction:

- Would I be right in thinking that...?
- What you seem to be saying is...?
- Do you therefore feel that...?

3. Interpreting: trying to express what you think the other person is trying to say or express the feelings that lie behind the facts:

- Would it be true to say that you do not get on well with X?

Feedback Skills:

1. Differentiating between facts and emotions

It is important to differentiate between your own feelings on the matter and the facts. If your own feelings have been aroused it is possible that you will allow these to obscure the facts. As a result you start becoming parental, using words like "must" and "should have." This has an effect on your listener, who may then exhibit a defensive behavior.

2. Positive and negative feedback

Feedback is either positive or negative but it must be constructive. For this you need to use evidence to support your case and then together suggest how you can either build on good behavior or improve bad behavior.

3. Giving feedback

When structuring your feedback sessions try the following:

- Start with the positive -- anything at all that shows you value the person. Make it as factual as possible.
- Comment on specific behavior, citing your evidence.
- Choose your priority areas. Even if there is a lot wrong, people are demoralized if given a lot of negative feedback at once. Aim to change important areas first.
- Allow people to explore the implications of their behavior and if possible come to the same conclusions that you have.

- Own your own feedback but be aware it is only one perception. Listen for any alternative view and do not prejudge if you can avoid it.

4. Receiving feedback

When on the receiving end of feedback adopt the following behaviors:

- Listen to what is being said without arguing or interrupting no matter how much you disagree.
- Make sure you understand by clarifying information rather than making assumptions.
- Use your peer group to check out the information you are being given, especially if you have doubts.

5. Giving and receiving feedback

- Think of a recent occasion on which you have given feedback. How far do you believe you carried out the suggestions for giving feedback effectively?
- Can you identify one suggestion for improving the way in which you give feedback on the next occasion, either in general or to a particular person?
- Consider the last occasion on which you received some feedback. How well do you think you met the guidelines given for that?
- Is there a specific area in which you feel you could improve your capacity to receive feedback in the future?

The Mentor Role: Six Behavioral Functions *

1. Relationship Emphasis

Conveys through active, empathetic listening a genuine understanding and acceptance of the mentee's feelings.

Purpose:

To create a psychological climate of trust which allows mentees to honestly share and reflect upon their personal experiences (positive and negative) as adult learners.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Practice responsive listening (verbal and nonverbal reactions that signal sincere interest).
- Ask open-ended questions related to expressed immediate concerns about actual situations.

- Provide descriptive feedback based on observations rather than inferences of motives.
- Use perception checks to ensure comprehension of feelings.
- Offer nonjudgmental sensitive responses to assist in clarification of emotional states and reactions.

2. Information Emphasis

Directly requests detailed information from and offers specific suggestions to mentees about their current plans and progress in achieving personal, educational, and career goals.

Purpose:

To ensure that advice offered is based on accurate and sufficient knowledge of individual mentees.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Ask questions aimed at assuring factual understanding of present educational and career situation.
- Review relevant background to develop adequate personal profile.
- Ask probing questions which require concrete answers.
- Offer directive-type comments about present problems and solutions that should be considered.
- Make restatements to ensure factual accuracy and interpretive understanding.
- Rely on facts as an integral component of the decision-making process.

3. Facilitative Focus

Guides mentees through a reasonably in-depth review of and exploration of their interests, abilities, ideas, and beliefs.

Purpose:

To assist mentees in considering alternative views and options while reaching their own decisions about attainable personal, academic, and career objectives.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Pose hypothetical questions to expand individual views.
- Uncover the underlying experiential and information basis for assumptions.
- Present multiple viewpoints to generate a more in-depth analysis of decisions and options.
- Examine the seriousness of commitment to goals.
- Analyze reasons for current pursuits.
- Review recreational and vocational preferences.

4. Confrontive Focus

Respectfully challenges mentees' explanations for or avoidance of decisions and actions relevant to their development as adult learners.

Purpose:

To help mentees attain insight into unproductive strategies and behaviors and to evaluate their need and capacity to change.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Use careful probing to assess psychological readiness of the mentee to benefit from different points of views.
- Make an open acknowledgment of concerns about possible negative consequences of constructive ("critical") feedback on the relationship.
- Employ a confrontive verbal stance aimed at the primary goal of promoting self-assessment of apparent discrepancies.
- Focus on most likely strategies and behaviors for meaningful change.
- Use the least amount of carefully stated feedback necessary for impact.
- Offer comments (before and after confrontive remarks) to reinforce belief in positive potential for mentee growth beyond the current situation.

5. Mentor Model

Shares life experiences and feelings as a "role model" with mentees in order to personalize and enrich the relationship.

Purpose:

To motivate mentees to take necessary risks, to make decisions without certainty of successful results, and to overcome difficulties in the journey toward educational and career goals.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Offer personal thoughts and genuine feelings to emphasize the value of learning from unsuccessful or difficult experiences (as trial and error and self-correction, and not as growth-limiting "failures").
- Select related examples from own life (and experiences as mentor of other mentees) based on probable motivational value.
- Provide a direct, realistic assessment of positive belief in mentee's ability to pursue attainable goals.
- Express a confident view of appropriate risk-taking as necessary for personal, educational, training, and career development.
- Make statements that clearly encourage personal mentee actions to attain stated objectives.

6. Mentee Vision

Stimulates mentees critical thinking with regard to envisioning their own future and developing their personal and professional potential.

Purpose:

To encourage mentees as they manage personal changes and take initiatives in their transitions through life events as independent adult learners.

Mentor Behaviors:

- Make statements which require reflection on present and future educational, training, and career attainments.
- Ask questions aimed at clarifying perceptions (positive and negative) about personal ability to manage change.
- Review individual choices based on a reasonable assessment of options and resources.
- Make comments directed at analysis of problem-solving and decision-making strategies.
- Express confidence in carefully thought-out decisions.
- Offer remarks that show respect for mentees' capacity to determine their own future.

Encourage mentees to develop talents and pursue dreams.