

Effective Mentoring Relationships:

The Mentor's Role (Part 1 of 2)

by Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones

Whether your mentoring relationship is thriving or merely coasting along, it makes sense to take a close look at it now and then to see what is and isn't working well.

The Mentoring Group has found that planned mentoring relationships tend to produce more satisfaction for both parties when certain elements are in place and when both the mentor and the mentee take active roles. (These can also occur in totally informal or what are called enhanced informal relationships. However, the factors are much more difficult to assess and influence without explicit agreements between you and your informal mentees.)

We invite you to take a look at one or two of your more intentional or formal mentoring relationships, perhaps one that seems to be succeeding and another that doesn't feel completely right to you. Read over the following elements, and begin thinking what is and isn't a strength in those relationships. Next month you'll have a chance to assess your performance formally on these factors.

Key Ingredients of Intentional/Planned/Formal Mentoring Relationships

1. Purpose

This relationship is a high priority for both of you. You consider being a mentor as one of the main purposes of your life. You and your mentee are clear on why you're together and the reasons you're meeting. You've discussed and agreed upon what you'll work on, and you'll recognize when you've completed your purpose. You feel good about the focus of your relationship and what you're doing in it. From time to time you check in to see if you should change that purpose or focus in some way. When you've accomplished the purpose of your relationship, you're willing to see the relationship shift focus or perhaps end for the time being.

2. Communication

You communicate in the ways (in person, phone, email, mail) you both prefer. You get back to your mentee in the timeframe you've agreed upon. Your mentee does the same. The communication between you adds up to at least one or two hours a month and is frequent enough for both of you. You're an effective listener, and you remember what your mentee tells you. You ask appropriate questions, and your mentee responds. You share information about yourself. You monitor your nonverbal language to be sure it's conveying what you want it to. You help your mentee recognize how he/she is communicating and, where appropriate, you make suggestions for improvement.

3. Trust

The trust between you is growing. You welcome and keep in confidence the information your mentee shares with you. Your mentee knows he/she can count on you to be honest yet safe and to follow through on your promises. You avoid any trust-breaking behaviors such as canceling appointments without compelling reasons, talking negatively about others or unfairly criticizing your mentee. You're increasingly sharing more of yourself and are becoming less guarded than when you first got together.

4. Process

Your meetings and other interactions are moving along at the right pace. You meet often enough to suit you both, and those sessions are usually the right length. You both like where you're meeting. You're aware of the four stages of formal mentoring (planning, building relationship/negotiating agreement, developing the mentee/maintaining momentum, and ending the formal mentoring part of the relationship) and are helping guide your mentee through them. You like how you operate as a mentoring pair and check in with each other to see if you're both satisfied.

5. Progress

You're helping your mentee identify appropriate life goals and build competencies to reach those goals. You help him/her identify interesting learning experiences and process the results of these together. Your mentee has made significant progress toward the goals since starting to meet with you. You're making significant progress in your ability to mentor.

6. Feedback

You asked your mentee how he/she wanted positive and corrective feedback from you. You're doing your best to give this feedback in an honest and tactful manner and as frequently as agreed upon. You give your mentee much more positive reinforcement than you give correction. When you give your mentee feedback, you observe how he/she applies it and, if necessary, mention points again. You invited him/her to give you positive and corrective feedback on how you're doing as a mentor. When you receive feedback, you're non-defensive and take immediate steps to apply it.

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Effective Mentoring Relationships:

The Mentor's Role (Part 2 of 2)

by Dr. Linda Phillips-Jones

Last month you learned about the six key Ingredients of effective mentoring relationships and your *mentor role* in each of these.

Here's an opportunity to assess yourself on these six factors. Take a few minutes to print out these pages and write your answers. Try to rate yourself as you *actually are*, not as you'd like to be.

Consider sharing the results with one of your own mentors. You may or may not wish to share the results with your mentee; that's up to you.

A similar role self-check is available for your mentee, in fact, your mentee may choose to show you his/her assessment and ask for your opinion of its accuracy. The two of you could use either assessment as a tool for talking about the nature and quality of your relationship and how it could be even better.

Directions: For each item, rate yourself as follows:

1 = Strongly disagree 3 = Agree

2 = Disagree 4 = Strongly agree

1. Purpose

- ___ This mentoring relationship is a high priority for me.
- ___ Finding mentees/being a responsible mentor is one of the most important steps I can take.
- ___ I've asked my mentee to clarify why he/she wants to meet with me.
- ___ I've asked my mentee to propose one or more goals to work on in this relationship.
- ___ My mentee and I are clear on how we'll recognize when he's/she's reached the goal(s).
- ___ I feel good about the focus of this relationship and what I'm doing in it.
- ___ This relationship is a good use of my time.
- ___ From time to time I check in to see if we should change our focus in some way.
- ___ Once my mentee has accomplished his/her goal(s), I'm willing to see the relationship shift focus or perhaps end for the time being.

Total points for Purpose: _____

2. Communication

- ___ I communicate in the ways (in person, phone, email, mail) we agreed.
- ___ I get back to my mentee within the timeframe we agreed.
- ___ The communication between us adds up to at least one or two hours a month. ___ Occasionally, I spontaneously contact my mentee just to say hello or pass on some information.
- ___ I'm an effective listener and remember what my mentee tells me.
- ___ I ask appropriate questions.
- ___ I share appropriate information about myself.
- ___ I monitor my nonverbal language to be sure it's conveying what I want it to.
- ___ I give my mentee suggestions for how he/she can communicate better.
- ___ I work on being a better communicator.

Total points for Communication: _____

3. Trust

- ___ I've talked about the topics of trust and confidentiality with my mentee.
- ___ I'm beginning to trust my mentee more and more.
- ___ I'm becoming less guarded than when we first got together.
- ___ I share important information about me with my mentee.
- ___ My mentee seems to be trusting me more and more.
- ___ I welcome and keep in confidence the information he/she shares with me.
- ___ My mentee can count on me to be honest.
- ___ He/She can count on me to follow through on my promises.
- ___ I avoid any trust-breaking behaviors such as canceling appointments without compelling reasons, talking negatively about others, or making excuses about why I don't follow through.

- ___ I'm willing to forgive some mistakes my mentee makes because my trust in him/her is strong.

Total points for Trust: _____

4. Process

- I ask my mentee to take responsibility for scheduling our meetings.
 - I like all or most of our meeting locations.
 - I've checked to be sure my mentee likes our meeting locations.
 - I like the length of our get-togethers.
 - I've checked to be sure my mentee likes the length of our get-togethers.
 - I'm satisfied with the way we conduct our meetings.
 - I've checked to be sure my mentee is satisfied with how we conduct our meetings.
 - I'm aware of the four stages of formal mentoring.
 - I'm helping us move through these four stages.
 - I've checked to see if my mentee likes the style and frequency of our emails.
- Total points for Process: _____

5. Progress

- My mentee has one or more specific goal(s) to work on with my help.
 - I make it easy for my mentee to ask for help.
 - I ask my mentee to take the lead on identifying interesting learning experiences to try.
 - I sometimes suggest learning experiences for my mentee. I ask my mentee do at least one learning activity in between our mentoring meetings.
 - I ask for the results of his/her learning and discuss it with him/her.
 - Since starting to meet with me, my mentee has made significant progress toward goal(s).
 - I'm making notable progress in my ability to mentor.
 - I'm helping my mentee learn more about being an effective mentee.
 - I help my mentee celebrate progress.
- Total points for Progress: _____

6. Feedback

- I asked my mentee how and how often he/she wants positive feedback.
 - I provide enough positive feedback to my mentee.
 - I asked my mentee how he/she wants corrective feedback.
 - I give my mentee positive feedback about his/her actions and personal qualities.
 - I give my mentee enough corrective feedback.
 - I graciously receive positive feedback from my mentee.
 - I encourage my mentee to show appreciation to me and other helpers.
 - I asked my mentee to give me corrective feedback about my mentoring efforts.
 - When I receive corrective feedback from my mentee, I'm usually non-defensive.
 - When I receive corrective feedback from my mentee, I take immediate steps to apply it.
- Total points for Feedback: _____

Total points for all six factors: _____

Scoring: Add up your points for each factor, and then total all your points.

161-240 points: You seem to be a committed, effective mentor. Check this out with other mentors you admire and/or with your mentee to be sure your assessment is accurate. Continue to enjoy mentoring and continue to polish your skills.

81-160 points: You're doing many things right as a mentor. Talk with someone even more experienced in formal mentoring to see if your assessment is accurate and if he/she has suggestions for improvement. Try to add or improve your performance on any items that you rated low.

80 or fewer points: It's admirable that you took this assessment and want to improve as a mentor. You may be harder on yourself than you need to be. Talk with your own mentor or someone

more knowledgeable about formal mentoring to see if he/she will give you honest feedback on what you're doing right and what you could improve. Try to add a few new effective behaviors over the coming months.

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