



## Mentoring: Fundamental Concepts

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**“You can get everything you want in life, if you will just help enough other people get what they want.” – Zig Ziglar**

- I. The Greek **“Mentor”** was a trusted friend of Odysseus charged with the education of Odysseus’ son Telemachus. The term has continued to reflect a “trusted counselor or guide” in a variety of situations. One educational definition of a mentoring relationship is stated, “a naturally formed, one-on-one, mutual, committed ... relationship between a junior and senior person designed to promote personal and professional development beyond any particular curricular or institutional goals.” (Rose et al, 2005).
- II. **The mentor as teacher:** One view of mentoring that it is simply “teaching taken to a deeper level.” Ideally, mentors act as role models, review the student or protégé’s work and progress, push them toward short and long term goals, invest in their potential, and promote their careers. In the deeper realm, mentors are open to hearing about emotional and personal issues, sharing their relevant experiences and finding resources, for the mentee’s needs.
- III. **Effective mentoring** requires voluntary engagement of both partners, mutual respect, shared responsibility and empowerment of the mentee. (Brookfield, 1986)
- IV. **Stages of the mentoring relationship:** Establishing rapport, determining purpose, assessing current situation, setting objectives, developing methods, implementing actions, and assessing results.



**A. Four Phase Model (From Zachary, 2000)**

- i. **Preparation for mentor:** Explore motivation, assess mentoring skills, clarify expectations and roles, determine viability of specific relationship.
- ii. **Negotiating:** Agree on goals, content and process of relationship, determine details of meetings, responsibilities, criteria for success, accountability and conclusion of relationship.
- iii. **Enabling:** Implement learning, nurture professional growth, offer feedback.
- iv. **Closure:** Evaluate, acknowledge and celebrate achievements; conclude relationship term and talk about transitions that will occur.

**V. The “Time” Issue:** Lack of time is a common reason for failure of mentoring relationships. Acknowledging time issues is important in all aspects and phases of mentoring relationships.

- a. “Time entails more than willingness and dedication, or even meeting time. It needs to be a commitment.” (Zachary, 2000)
- b. Time expectations and time constraints can be discussed freely during the negotiating phase to avoid future problems.
- c. Use time windows effectively by having a planned meeting agenda and devoting your attention fully to the mentoring relationship during that meeting.
- d. Suggestions:
  - i. Ask yourself what is keeping you from spending the time needed – procrastination, lack of commitment, unrealistic or inaccurate assumptions?
  - ii. Call time out if there is a time period when you need “space” have other obligations that will interfere with mentoring.
  - iii. Reflect on how the time is being spent and make plans to use the time available well.
  - iv. Schedule time commitments in advance.

**Table 1. Tips for Starting Mentoring Relationships (From Carr, Mentors Peer Resources)**

<b>Make a List</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Things you would have wanted to know when you were in your mentee’s position</li> <li>• Things about yourself, your position and background</li> <li>• Things you would like to know about the mentee</li> </ul>
<b>Take the Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make the first call and set the meeting times</li> </ul>
<b>Be clear about purpose and boundaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set ground rules about gifts, loans, recommendations and getting involved in disputes (if relevant)</li> <li>• Consider formal agreement/contract</li> </ul>
<b>Create an agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know each other</li> <li>• Goals and expectations</li> <li>• Logistics for meetings and communication</li> <li>• Concerns</li> <li>• Questions</li> </ul>

<b>Listen deeply and ask powerful questions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen for understanding</li> <li>• Suspend judgment</li> <li>• Provide accepting/supporting atmosphere</li> <li>• Ask challenging questions that allow the mentee to talk about what is important to them</li> </ul>
<b>Experiment with process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try different venues, exercises or activities to build the relationship</li> </ul>
<b>Focus on wisdom, not expertise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't try to give set "answers"</li> <li>• Offer your own experience as examples, not prescriptions</li> <li>• Collaborate on solutions</li> </ul>
<b>Maintain and respect privacy and honesty</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Don't jeopardize key values</li> <li>• Maintain confidentiality</li> </ul>
<b>Plan for the next meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine what could be useful to improve the next meeting</li> <li>• Set the date for the next meeting</li> </ul>

**Table 2. Strategies and Considerations for Initial Conversations (from Zachary)**

<b>To-do List</b>	<b>Conversation Strategies</b>	<b>Mentor Considerations</b>
<b>Take time to get to know each other.</b>	Obtain a copy of the mentee's bio, or create one through conversation	Establish rapport Exchange information Identify points of connection
<b>Talk about mentoring.</b>	"Have you ever been engaged in a mentoring relationship before? What did you learn?"	Talk about your own mentors and experiences
<b>Determine the mentee's goals.</b>	"What do you want to learn from this experience (in broad goals)?"	Determine if the mentee has clear goals and objectives
<b>Determine the mentee's needs and expectations.</b>	"What do you want out of the mentor/mentee relationship?"	Clarify needs and objectives
<b>Define the deliverables</b>	"What would success look like for you?"	Ask yourself if you have the expertise and skills to help this individual meet their goals.
<b>Share your assumptions, needs, expectations and limitations.</b>	Ask for feedback	Clarify what you are willing and able to contribute
<b>Discuss options and opportunities</b>	"How would you like to go about achieving your goals?" "What are your preferred communication and learning styles?" "What is the most useful kind of assistance I can provide?"	Consider and discuss implications of the mentees' styles and how they compare to yours.

**Table 3: Recommended Do's/Don'ts for Enhancing Mentoring Relationships (From Rose)**

<p><b><u>Mentor Dos</u></b>          Be available          Convey respect and confidence          Focus on mentee          Ask questions          Track progress          Identify strengths          Give feedback          Reassess</p>	<p><b><u>Mentee Don't's</u></b>          Promote your own agendas          Use "free labor"          Take credit          Make a "clone"</p>
<p><b><u>Mentee Dos</u></b>          Be punctual          Follow through          Set agendas          Communicate          Accept critique          Convey respect          Accept challenge          Show appreciation          Reassess</p>	<p><b><u>Mentee Don'ts</u></b>          Avoid decisions          Rely exclusively on mentor          Acquiesce to mentor's ideas          Overidealize relationship</p>

**VII. Questions to ponder:**

- Should mentors be assigned or must they evolve naturally?
- Should mentoring meetings be required or voluntary?
- Should mentor/mentees be matched by gender or race?
- Should mentoring be one-on-one or team based?
- How should mentoring efforts be monitored? Rewarded?
- Is mentoring a fundamental responsibility requirement of all professionals?
- Should mentors be internal or external to the college or organization?

**REFERENCES**

Zachary L. *The Mentor's Guide*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000

Carr, Mentors Peer Resources retrieved at <http://www.peer.ca/mentor.html>, September 22, 2005.

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