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Mentoring Relationships 101: How to be a Great Mentor

ASSOCIATIONS NOW,

Mentoring can be a challenge that is well worth your time and effort. Use these 14 tips to get the most out of mentoring sessions, for both you and your mentee.

- 1. Be fully present.** Mentoring requires excellent listening skills and your full attention. Set aside daily pressures during a mentoring session so that you can devote your full attention to your mentee.
- 2. Take time to make a personal connection at the start of the session.** One of the pleasures of a mentoring relationship is the sense of connection between two people, so take time to make a personal connection.
- 3. Ask open-ended questions.** To provide a relevant perspective, a mentor must understand the mentee's situation and concerns at a deep level. Ask questions that call for a reflective response.
- 4. Listen with curiosity, not judgment.** Be conscious of your own listening and strive for deep listening that comes from your own curiosity rather than problem solving.
- 5. Try not to interrupt, unless there is a need to manage time or focus the dialogue.** Do paraphrase or repeat what the mentee says to confirm that your understanding is accurate.
- 6. Ask direct questions to focus the session.** Mentoring sessions often go by quickly, so focus at the beginning with top-of-mind questions.
- 7. Notice what has heart and meaning for the mentee.** By paying attention to the emotion and energy of the mentee, you will be able to observe what matters most to her, as well as where she may feel discouraged or overwhelmed.
- 8. Tell your story.** People often learn best through storytelling. If you have experiences related to the challenges faced by your mentee, check with him to see if he would like you to share your experience.
- 9. Share the conversation rather than doing all the talking.** Sometimes, mentors mistakenly believe that their job is mainly to impart wisdom and expertise. Make sure you have a dialogue with your mentee and ask questions.
- 10. Set and honor boundaries.** Mentoring relationships work best when each person knows what the expectations are. During the first session, establish how the mentoring relationship will be set up.
- 11. Follow through on your commitments.** Inevitably, you will find yourself volunteering the title of a book, a referral to one of your contacts, to review or pass on a resume, or some other small service to your mentee. Make note of your promise and make it a priority to follow through.
- 12. Be encouraging and action oriented.** Recognize that the problem isn't figuring out what to do, the problem is doing it!
- 13. Give helpful feedback.** Provide constructive feedback that is specific, descriptive, and nonjudgmental.
- 14. Honor confidentiality.** Conversations between mentor and mentee must be considered private.