

How to Be a Great Mentor



By

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[Mentoring](#) a colleague or intern can be an incredibly rewarding experience for both parties; the lessons and learning from a mentorship can be beneficial to your nonprofit's mission as well. If you're a mentor, here are some ways to build a great relationship with your mentee.

Get to know your mentee. Ask about their professional interests and goals. Listen with no agenda except to learn more about your mentee. Find out what kinds of things they want your help and guidance on. Tune into areas of shared interest, but also resolve to discover and explore areas of difference and unique interests and experiences.

Set expectations collaboratively with your mentee. Consider:

- How often will you meet?
- How available will you be to your mentee between meetings?
- How will you know if the mentorship is fruitful?
- How will you work together? Will you give your mentee "homework" between meetings, or simply have free-flowing discussions?

Celebrate their achievements. Mentor-mentee discussions can get heavy, as mentees often seek help or guidance on issues they struggle with. Make sure to highlight and cheer your mentee's accomplishments, too. When you see your mentee excel, name it and congratulate them.

Honor your commitments. Treat your meetings with your mentee as you would any other professional responsibility; work to make every meeting, and if you ever need to miss a meeting, let them know as soon as possible. Accountable means doing the things you agree to do. When you tell your mentee you'll do something, do it.

Look for ways to help them grow. As your mentee shares their goals with you, keep an eye out for opportunities that could help them reach those goals—like a conference on a subject they want to learn about, or an introduction you could make to a potential future boss.

Ask thoughtful questions. When your mentee shares a struggle or a dream, ask questions to learn more about why something's important to them or why they reacted a certain way in a conflict. A mentor can provide valuable outside perspective to help their mentee see patterns in their behavior, both strengths and challenges.

Avoid assumptions. It can be easy to jump to conclusions about what your mentor might be thinking or feeling. But if you're ever unsure about their reactions to something you say, ask. You'll learn more about your mentor and glean information about how best to work with them.

Share your own struggles. Your discussions should principally center on your mentee, not on you. But if you have relevant experience to share, especially about setbacks and challenges, do so. When you're vulnerable, you will encourage your mentee to be vulnerable. This can show your mentee they're not alone in facing

professional difficulties and help build their confidence.

Prepare to learn. Mentoring is a two-way relationship, and many mentors in successful pairings learn a great deal from their less experienced mentee. Open your mind and heart to learning from your mentee. If you're struggling with a work-related decision or fork in the road, ask your mentee: Would it be ok if I asked for your advice? What would you do?

Don't make decisions for your mentee. Help your mentee see multiple sides of a situation and explore the possibilities, but resist the temptation to make decisions for them. A great mentorship helps the mentee get new perspectives and solve problems for themselves.

Resources

- [How to Be an Amazing Mentor](#), HubSpot
- [How to Be a Mentor - 4 Ways to Change Someone's Life](#), BetterUp
- [How to Be a Good Mentor: 10 Important Steps You Can Follow](#), Indeed