

# Becoming A Mentor

***The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. - William Arthur Ward***

**Be committed.** Being a mentor is a commitment, Kahn says. “If you’re offering to help someone you need to follow through with that promise by being there for them when needed.”  
**Know that your mentee can be anyone, anywhere.** “Mentoring needn’t follow the traditional ‘elder-upstart’ prescription anymore. It can be peer-to-peer across functions or industries,” Rychman says. “It’s about supplementing skill gaps and helping each person learn and grow.”

As a mentor, you’re someone who knows something your mentee doesn’t, and you care enough to help them learn and succeed.

“Today, industries overlap and are interdependent in ways that were inconceivable a decade ago, and employees can no longer afford to stay stuck in a particular silo, oblivious to developments in other fields,” she says. “Companies have realized that when people from different backgrounds with varying skills convene to debate and brainstorm, advances occur. In the ‘new,’ conceptual economy, the ability to draw knowledge from diverse spheres is prized.”

**Listen.** One of your jobs as a mentor is to provide advice and encouragement, but in order to do so, you need to make the time to listen and understand the situation, Kahn says.

“Intently listening to a mentee as they vent and, ideally, sort their way through confusion, is often more than enough to get them through the day,” Parnell says. “If you ask any therapist about the power of listening, they will tell you the same thing: It is massive. Any mentor that is worth their weight spends considerably more time listening than they do speaking.”

**Have your own mentor(s) and network.** Today, the most successful people build relationships and gather intelligence from a wide variety of experts in all industries and age brackets, Rychman says. “People who are insular—who always return to the same small circle for advice and support—become closed off from opportunities.” In order to be the very best mentor, you need to continue building your network and taking advice from those you trust.

**Be open-minded and compassionate.** “If you’ve ever argued with someone, you know that they will never see your side until they’re convinced that you’ve seen theirs,” Parnell says. “And to provide valuable guidance and advice that is well received, it is necessary to first understand the mentee’s needs, wants, feelings, et cetera. This can only come in the form of deep and implicit empathy.”

**Have patience.** Much like parenting, mentoring can be a satisfying, but also long-term and trying, endeavor, Parnell says. “While the mentee needs and wants direction, often times this requires a bit of constructive criticism, which can be hard to take. It is vital that a mentor be a patient soul, because tempers may flare, and quick fixes are few and far between.”

**Be a role model.** As a mentor, your actions are being evaluated, so you must set the bar for yourself just as high, or higher, than you'd expect from your mentee, Kahn says.

"Your goal is to not only provide direction and advice, but to get your mentee to act upon them," Parnell adds. "And while conversations can be motivating, few things are more impactful than to lead by example. A mentor's mantra must be: 'Do as I do, not just as I say.'"

**Care about the relationship.** "Invest yourself in your mentee and you'll get so much more out of the experience," Kahn says.

"Mentees are usually eager, invested, and can be a bit vulnerable, leaving them to hang on your words and to pay close attention to, well, everything you do," Parnell says. "Few things are more demotivating than 'phoning in' your time and efforts; it takes a sincere interest in the betterment of your mentee to avoid this. So, if you can't muster a sincere desire right from the beginning, you'll do better to find a more suitable fit, because you may do more harm than good," he concludes.

## **Willingness to Share Skills, Knowledge, and Expertise**

A good mentor is willing to teach what he/she knows and accept the mentee where they currently are in their professional development. Good mentors can remember what it was like just starting out in the field. The mentor does not take the mentoring relationship lightly and understands that good mentoring requires time and commitment and is willing to continually share information and their ongoing support with the mentee.

## **Demonstrates a Positive Attitude and Acts As a Positive Role Model**

A good mentor exhibits the personal attributes it takes to be successful in the field. By showing the mentee what it takes to be productive and successful, they are demonstrating the specific behaviors and actions required to succeed in the field.

## **Takes a Personal Interest in the Mentoring Relationship**

Good mentors do not take their responsibility as a mentor lightly. They feel invested in the success of the mentee.

Usually, this requires someone who is knowledgeable, compassionate, and possesses the attributes of a good teacher or trainer. [Excellent communication skills](#) are also required.

A good mentor is committed to helping their mentees find success and gratification in their chosen profession. Overall good mentoring requires empowering the mentee to develop their own strengths, beliefs, and personal attributes.

## **Exhibits Enthusiasm in the Field**

A mentor who does not exhibit enthusiasm about his/her job will ultimately not make a good mentor. Enthusiasm is catching and new employees want to feel as if their job has meaning and the potential to create a good life.

## **Motivates Others by Setting a Good Example.**

The ultimate success of being a good mentor...

**What Does a Mentor Do?** A mentor works on two levels, both supporting the protégée in meeting essential job duties and helping her envision and take steps toward the career she desires. A mentor combines instruction in professional behavior and tasks with affective support. A mentor may fulfill all or a combination of roles. The mentor:

- Advocates – Offers sponsorship, provides exposure and visibility within the organization.
- Acquires resources – Brings critical readings, opportunities, or experiences to the attention of the protégée.
- Acts as a role model – Offers insight on how he or she “made it” in the organization.
- Advises – Shares institutional and professional wisdom, critiques performance, makes suggestions.
- Coaches – Helps a protégée learn new skills and practice new behaviors.
- Protects – Helps a protégée find new and challenging opportunities within the organization while protecting her from adverse forces and “dead-end” job assignments.
- Supports – Listens with a sympathetic ear, explains unwritten rules, and acknowledges disappointments and triumphs.

- Before becoming a mentor, here are a few things to understand about the role of mentoring. Most of us have had a teacher, supervisor or coach who has been a mentor to us and made a positive difference in our lives. Those people wore many hats, acting as delegators, role models, cheerleaders, policy enforcers, advocates, and friends. Mentors assume these different roles during the course of a relationship, and share some basic qualities:
- **A sincere desire to be involved with a young person**
- **Respect for young people**
- **Active listening skills**
- **Empathy**
- **Ability to see solutions and opportunities**
- **Flexibility**

- **Empathy**

What time commitment can I make?

What age of youth would I like to work with?

Would I like to work with one child or with a group of children?

Would I like to team with other adults to mentor a child or a group of children?

What types of activities interest me? Do I want to help a youth learn a specific skill, pursue an interest, help with schoolwork or just be a caring adult friend?

What mentoring location would I prefer?

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<https://www.thebalance.com/a-guide-to-understanding-the-role-of-a-mentor-2275318>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ianaltman/2017/09/12/the-dos-and-donts-of-mentoring/#4f949493c9>

<https://hbr.org/2017/02/what-the-best-mentors-do>