

Do's for Mentees and Mentors

An unspoken etiquette exists in mentoring relationships. Ideally, one of the first things mentors and mentees should discuss is how they want to interact. As with all etiquette, the over-riding goal is to make the other person feel at ease and valued. In general, this means showing kindness, flexibility, and appreciation, and using a combination of good business and social manners. More specifically, there are several do's that are usually followed in successful mentoring relationships.

Suggestions for Mentees

Do . . .

1. Be considerate of your mentor's time and don't assume your mentor has unlimited time for you. Return phone calls promptly, be on time. Let your mentor suggest extra minutes or activities.
2. Listen attentively to what your mentor has to say. When topic seems irrelevant to your immediate needs store information for future use.
3. Be complete yet succinct in your comments and explanations. Ask directly if you're talking too much.
4. Seriously consider all advice you receive.
5. Show evidence that you have utilized the help. If you choose an alternative, point out how you used the help to make your choice.
6. Show appreciation for every form of assistance your mentor gives you. Say thanks, praise him or her in front of others.
7. Make it easy for your mentor to give you constructive feedback. Ask for it early and often.
8. Assume the relationship will be strictly professional. Let your mentor take the lead in making the relationship more personal or friend-like. (It may never develop that way.)
9. Make only positive or neutral comments about your mentor to others. If you disagree with your mentor's behaviors or values, share your perceptions with him or her. If the situation doesn't change, take steps to end the relationship, and ask for a different mentor.
10. Be prepared to move out of the mentor-mentee aspect relationship once it has served its purpose. Part on good terms.
11. Keep the doors open to return to your mentor for advice or other help later. Keep in touch once you part company. Send a note or call time to time to provide progress reports and say thanks.

Suggestions for Mentors

Do . . .

1. Take the initiative in the relationship. Invite your mentee to meet, suggest topics to discuss, ask if you can offer advice, etc.
2. Respect your mentee's time as much as your own. Don't assume that your schedule always has top priority.
3. Be explicit about your own needs and limits (e.g., time constraints, style of interacting).
4. Always ask if you can make a suggestion or offer feedback.
5. Tell your mentee that you don't expect him or her to follow all of your suggestions.
6. Expect your mentee to move towards his or her (not your) goals.
7. Express appreciation to your mentee for help given you or other steps taken.
8. Recognize and work through conflicts in caring ways. Invite discussion of differences with your mentee.
9. Keep your relationship on a professional basis, particularly at first. Consider carefully if you want to encourage close friendship.
10. Make only positive or neutral comments about your mentee to others. If you disagree with your mentee's behavior or values, share your perceptions with him or her and get help if necessary. If the situation doesn't change, take steps to end the relationship.
11. Be prepared to end the relationship (at least the mentor-mentee aspect) once it has served its purposes. Part on good terms.
12. Keep the doors open for your mentee to return in the future.