

The Mentor Experience

A mentor is simply someone who helps someone else learn something the learner would otherwise have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all.

Effective mentors are like friends in that their goal is to create a safe context for growth. They are also like family in that their focus is to offer an unconditional, faithful acceptance of the protégé.

The recipe for a good mentor relationship: SAGE

Surrendering: Yielding to a flow greater than either player in the process. It is surrendering to the process of learning, rather than trying to drive the process.

Accepting is the act of inclusion. It is ridding oneself of bias, preconceived judgments, and human labeling. It is to embrace, rather than evaluate or judge.

Gifting is the act of generosity. As opposed to giving, it means bestowing something of value upon another without expecting anything in return.

Extending means pushing the relationship beyond its expected boundaries.

A mentoring relationship is an honor. Except for love, there is no greater gift one can give another than the gift of growth.

Qualities of great Mentor partnerships

Balance. In a balanced learning partnership, energy is given early in the relationship to role clarity and communication of expectations. There is a spirit of generosity and acceptance rather than a focus on rules and rights. Partners respect their differences while respecting their common needs and objectives.

Truth. When a mentor works hard to give feedback to a protégé in a way that is caringly frank and compassionately straightforward, it is in pursuit of clean communication. When a mentor implores a protégé for candid feedback, it is a plea for clean communication. The path of learning begins with this genuineness and candor.

Trust. Trust begins with experience; experience begins with a leap of faith. Perfect monologues do not foster a climate of experimentation and risk taking. A trust-full partnership is one in which error is accepted as a necessary step on the path from novice to master.

Abundance. A partnership grounded in abundance is one between people who never take each other for granted. Such relationships are celebratory and affirming. As the mentor gives, the protégé reciprocates, and abundance begins to characterize the relationship.

Passion. Great mentoring partnerships are filled with passion; they are guided by deep feelings and a willingness to communicate those feelings.

Courage. A mentoring relationship takes courage; learning takes courage. The preamble to learning is risk, the willingness to take a shaky step without the security of perfection. The preamble to risk is courage.

Partnerships are the expectancy of the best in our abilities, attitudes, and aspirations. In a learning partnership, the mentor is not only helping the protégé but continually communicating a belief that s/he is a fan of the learner. Partnerships are far more than good synergy. Great partnerships go beyond “greater than” to a realm of unforeseen worth. And worth in a mentoring partnership is laced with the equity of balance, the clarity of truth, the security of trust, the affirmation of abundance, the energy of passion, and the boldness of courage.

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