

2.4 DOs and DON'Ts of a Successful Mentoring Relationship

Any relationship takes time to build, so allow yourself and your mentee this time. It is quite normal for the mentor to be nervous about the first meetings with their mentee. The mentee is usually nervous too. Please refer to Section 3 – Getting Started: First & Second Meeting Guides. Use these helpful DOs and DON'Ts to develop an effective relationship with your mentee.

DO:

- ❑ Take time to get to know your mentee.
- ❑ Understand the uniqueness of each individual. What works for you may not work for someone else.
- ❑ Take a few moments before meeting with your mentee to mentally prepare and remind yourself of the purpose of mentoring.
- ❑ Share information about yourself, particularly about your early career experiences and your life outside of work.
- ❑ Be positive, encourage, praise and compliment when appropriate.
- ❑ Ask thought-provoking, open-ended questions.
- ❑ Listen more and talk less.
- ❑ Empathize; don't sympathize. Sympathizing makes people feel like victims.
- ❑ Communicate high but not unrealistic expectations.
- ❑ Be consistent with your time commitment to the mentee. At first, you will need to take more of the initiative. However, it is important to encourage your mentee to be accountable and to take the initiative in setting up the meetings.
- ❑ Try to give concrete examples related to the topics you are discussing.
- ❑ Remember it is not your job to solve or fix your mentee's problems but to help your mentee to find the skills to do it.
- ❑ Encourage responsibility.
- ❑ Try and identify your mentee's strengths, talents and assets. Focus on those rather than weaknesses.
- ❑ Be open and honest, but do not burden your mentee with information that he or she does not need to know.
- ❑ Share both your failures and your successes. Focus on what you have learned.
- ❑ Understand your role: to help another grow in wisdom, judgment, resilience and independence.
- ❑ Establish confidentiality as soon as possible.
- ❑ Have fun.

DON'T:

- ❑ Make assumptions.
- ❑ Expect to have an instant rapport with your mentee.
- ❑ Ask only questions that can be answered with a “yes” or a “no.”
- ❑ Talk too much. This is easy to do if your mentee is quiet or you are uncomfortable.
- ❑ Fall into the trap of trying to solve the mentee’s issues. Remember you are not the parent or a therapist.
- ❑ Become overly partisan. Part of your role is to offer perspective.
- ❑ Share your personal problems unless this is relevant to how you have used this as an opportunity for growth.
- ❑ Nag, cajole, criticize or overly question your mentee.
- ❑ Make commitments and promises that you can’t keep.
- ❑ Don’t take your mentee’s comments personally. Remember, this time is about and for the mentee.
- ❑ Violate confidences.