

Marcella Allison:

I'm going barefoot because I will take myself out if I have shoes on. Fair warning.

I am going to remind all of you and myself at the same time, that as my mentor used to say, this is a generosity, not a performance. I've cut my talk in half, randomly threw slides out left and right in my room. We're taking 60 minutes down to 30.

What I'm hoping to share with you today and what I'm going to give you is what I consider the keys to the kingdom. I have built my entire career based on mentoring. In fact, at one point, I think it was Kevin Rogers who deemed me the most mentored copywriter in the industry. It has pluses and minuses.

I'm going to talk to you a little bit about how I used that to build my network, to grow my connections, to improve my skills, and how now, like we talked about when we kicked it off with the keynote, I'm at a stage in life ... I'm going to be 57 years old. I've had an amazing career. I'm really so excited now about being able to pay it forward by mentoring others. I'm really fortunate that there's a lot of women in this industry, Kim, many others, who are part of the collective who also want to pay it forward. So get us now while we want to download our brains into your brains.

I wanted to start by sharing one of the most powerful mentoring experiences that I've ever had, and it actually has absolutely nothing to do with copywriting, although it actually saved my copywriting business.

Nine years ago on April 1st, which will be what? Tomorrow? Is that tomorrow? Day after tomorrow? My son, we had an intervention. This is language for my son suffered from mental illness, addiction. He was using all kinds of stuff that I couldn't even pronounce, like bath salts, which I thought were the lavender things that went in your bathtub, not these things that you snorted up your nose that sent your brain into I don't even know what kind of chaos. We did this big intervention over April, Easter weekend, and we sent him to a facility. We actually had a person drive him down because I wasn't sure I could actually keep him in the car for all three and a half hours from Cincinnati. We had them drive him down to a little place called Nunnally, Tennessee, which is an hour away from here. So the last time that I was in Nashville was nine years ago. My son had been at this facility. It was called The Ranch, but not like that cool Netflix show. I'm going to get off this because every time I walk it squeaks, and it's making me crazy.

Okay. You guys okay if I come down here and not ... Okay. Yes.

All right. He's at The Ranch for seven days, and I have spent my entire retirement to send him there for two months, almost \$100,000 dollars, everything we had at the time. He's there seven days and I get a call saying, "We're not sure what happened, but he ran down to this river and he's convinced he's either

seen God or he is God, I'm not sure which," and they have transported him to Vanderbilt here in Nashville. They call us, so Tom and I jump in the car. That's my husband. We're on the way down to Nashville, and they tell us that he is catatonic, or almost catatonic at this point. So we have no idea if he's even going to know us or speak or what's going to happen when we get down here.

I'm an entrepreneur, so I have a fully running business that's going on at the same time. One of my many copy mentors is David Deutsch. Who here knows David? Lovely gentleman, great friend of mine. David and I are doing a swap. So he's working on a financial promo. I'm working on a financial promo. So I owe him comments and he owes me comments, and it's my turn to give his comments and he needs them. So my husband's driving, I say, "Okay, okay, okay. I'll call David while we're driving down." So, "Hi." Get on the phone. I got David's copy on my laptop. I'm in the passenger seat. Tom's driving. I would say, "Okay, so the headline, I think we've got one fatal flaw here. You need to take the word in the middle and it needs to be ... " And then it would go dead because I'm going in and out of the hills, Tennessee. Then Dave would call me back and he would say, "What?" I would say, "Okay, wait, where were we? All right, I was going to tell you ... " and then it would go dead again. About the fourth time, he was like, "Are you doing this on purpose? Is this to get back for all those harsh critiques I gave you?" I'm like, "No, I'm going in and out of the mountains," and I tell him what's going on with Jake.

He's just a sweetheart. He's so loving, one of my best friends. He's like, "Are you sure you can do this?" I'm like, "Yeah, yeah. It's okay." I say to my husband, "I think you better pull over because this is not working." So Tom goes, "Okay, I'm going to pull over." I'm not even paying attention. I got the laptop. He pulls over. I said, "Just find an exit." So I'm going through all these comments with David. We go through the headline, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. About 35 minutes later, I say, "Okay, I think we're good. Are you good?" David's like, "Yeah, I've got it. I'm going to be thinking about you." I'm like, "I love you. I love you too." I hang up, put the laptop down. I look up and my husband has parked the car in this massive gravel lot for the world's largest adult sex shop. There's a massive pink vibrator, and there's this sign adult movies. I like, "This is my life as an entrepreneur." My kid's in the psych ward, I'm giving copy critiques underneath a giant pink dildo."

We get here, we check into the hotel, we go running over to the Vanderbilt Adolescent Psychiatric Unit, which by the way, anyone who has children with issues, cannot recommend enough. Vanderbilt kicks ass, and believe me, I have been with my son in probably about 70 facilities. So when I say something kicks ass, it really kicks ass.

We go over to Vanderbilt. This is the way things go. We get in the elevator. We get out at the top and there's this huge security guard in front of the door. "Ma'am, you cannot come in." I'm like, "No, no, no, we're here to see my son." Someone attacked one of the nurses, got a chair through a window, everybody's in lockdown. "You can't come in." Thank you. Great. Anything else? Locusts, frogs, shadow of death? Anything else you'd like to send me today?

We go back to the apartment. We have a little hotel studio apartment. We go back and I call my sponsor, which is what we call a mentor in the 12-step world. I say to her, "You are not going to believe the shit show I have had today." I'm going down the list of all these things that have gone wrong in the day. I don't know what to do next. She says, "You're going to get dressed. You're going to find a nice restaurant. You and Tom are going to go out and celebrate your anniversary because it's also my 22nd wedding anniversary, hear a little music on Music Row, go hang out, take care of yourselves. He's fine. There's nothing you can do. You need to just go practice some self-care right now." I'm thinking, "Is she crazy? Does she not know what my life is like? Literally go out and have dinner and hear some blues? What is she thinking?"

This is the thing about a mentor. A mentor is so far above where you are that you almost can't see how to get there. When you see what they're doing and you know what you're experiencing ... Have you ever had that? It's almost like you're watching a celebrity on TV. You're like, "I don't know how I could do that." But Kathy, she was a widow. Her husband had mental illness and addiction and had built his own plane and that didn't go well. So now she was a widow. Seven kids, some of whom had addiction, some of whom had mental illness. It's the whole grab bag. She's raising them on her own. She is calm, funniest person I have ever met. Laughs, makes me laugh, joyful, happy. I'm thinking, "I want what she has," because her life is no less crazy than mine and yet she's experiencing it totally different.

That's the other thing about a mentor. When you come to this moment where someone has what you want and you see this thing that you aspire to in them but you have no idea of the steps that it would take to get you there, that is the moment when you need a mentor to take your hand and help you across that threshold, just like Rob and Kira are doing this entire time for you, just like your peers are doing here, just like all the speakers are doing here. In that moment I trusted her enough. I trusted her enough because I knew she had walked this path before me and because I saw how she was living her life, that I just shut up and took the advice. I stopped arguing. I stopped telling her why I couldn't possibly go out and listen to blues that night. I shut up and I took the advice. Because my son's illness is cyclical, I have probably spent four wedding anniversaries this way since 2013. So that was nine years ago.

I learned from her, from her mentoring, how to practice self-care, how to put myself first, how to do something different. Because before I would've been all frantic in the room. I would've been emailing everybody, calling everybody, cursing out the mental healthcare system. Well, I still do that, but you know what I mean in general. Instead, I just took a risk, listened to her advice, did the thing that she told me to do. Now, I have what she has. I can laugh. I can tell jokes about it. I can survive it. I can get through it. I can take care of myself.

Just so you know, because I'm a woman who I freely admit I'm addicted to trashy romance novels, and I love a happy ending. So just so you know, Jake has just graduated from the University of Cincinnati. He has a girlfriend, a job. He is not catatonic, and he tells me he wants to be a copywriter, he thinks. So there you go.

Okay. So this is what I want you to take from that. You are going to reach a moment where the step that you need to take, this gulf that you need to cross, is bigger than you can do alone. You need to look for the man or the woman who is standing on the other side. You need to ask them for help. Now, we're going to talk about how to do that because there are so many myths around mentoring and a lot of them just don't work. All right, where'd my clicker go? Oh, I left it up here. Remember, generosity, not performance. I found my clicker.

I am the founder of the Mentoress Collective. This is my way of paying it forward to women in the industry. I also mentor men. People ask me that all the time, "Do you not mentor any men?" I'm like, No, I mentor men. You're just not in the collective." So anyone who is female, identifies as female, or is female adjacent is welcome to join us in the Mentoress Collective. I am also a copywriter. I still work actively with many of my clients. I was the AWAI Copywriter of the Year. Okay, so all the kudos. We got all that down.

Here is the line. There's a great book by Russell Brand called Mentors. Full disclosure, he comes at this from the 12-step community, so recovering ... He's an actor. Actually, he was in Arthur, the remake of it. Anyway, he's an actor. He's a recovering alcoholic. But this is one of the best books on mentoring I've ever read. This is what he says. "I recognize that they have something I want, that they have achieved something I haven't, that as I am in this moment I sit before them, insufficient, and for the transfer of energy or education to take place, I must be mentally and spiritually prepared." You have to be open. How many times has someone asked you for advice and you gave it to them and then they told you why everything you told them to do was wrong. Happens with teenagers a lot. Okay, you have to be open. That's your job.

Okay. "All of us have strategies, but the strategies are limited. When you reach the limit, you need a mentor to guide you across the threshold." Okay, I beat you over the head with that. [inaudible 00:14:06] there? All right.

Here's what we think a mentor is. We think a mentor is Yoda, and he sits on our shoulder and he's like, "Turn left. No, turn right. Buy the red Toyota. Take that course, not this one." It's going to carry around this extra humpback, and we're going to know exactly what we're doing all the time. Does not work, does not work. The old idea of a top-down, all-knowing guru is gone for many reasons, which I'll tell you very quickly.

First, it's not scalable. It's not scalable. How many Yodas are there? One! Well, there's the Baby Yoda, but isn't that Yoda before he grew ... Anyway, there's only one Yoda and there's thousands, millions of us. It's not scalable.

It's not realistic. I could probably tell you everything about navigating the mental healthcare system after the last 10 years. But I know nothing about, I don't know, cornhole or baseball. I don't know what you need mentoring on, but the idea that one person would know absolutely all the gaps you have that you need filled as a mentor is just not realistic. It's not realistic.

The final thing is it doesn't work for women. This is a very sad backlash that came out of the #MeToo movement, which is according to leanin.org, men at the highest level in business, which let's still face it, 17 to 1 male/female ratio for CEOs, 17 men for every one woman in the C-suite, they will not mentor women because they're afraid of being falsely accused. I thought this was ridiculous until I had a young man, a friend of mine, call me up and hand to God ask me to chaperone a dinner. I was like Victorian chaperone and I'm like, "Are you just going to randomly jump across the table and accost her? What do you mean you need me to ... " He was like, "Oh, I don't like the optics. I want you to sit there with dinner with us." So believe me when I say men will not mentor young women.

So what do we have to do instead? What does work? There's two models I'm going to give you. The first one is called reciprocal mentoring or co-mentoring. This is where both the mentor and the mentee bring different skills together. I'm going to give you a little story of how this works. The problem is, we think, especially when it's top down because we're all, "What do I possibly have that I could offer?" Well, in Lean In, they found sometimes that male CEO had no idea what it was really like to be a woman at the executive level. They were cross-mentoring and having those conversations that no one else was having with them. So this is my situation through a connection in my network.

Can someone bring me some water? Sorry. I'm like ... Oh, the obvious shelf placement. Yeah, there we go. Okay.

So there's a gentleman, I like to call him millionaire entrepreneur Silicon Valley dude. I don't know how they find me. I'm this little Midwestern plump copywriter. Anyway ... I get a call and he's a connection of mine, connected to me through a friend of mine. Millionaire Silicon valley entrepreneur dude is interested. He's got this whole technology that I don't even understand because this is Silicon Valley and he uses 75 terms in the first five minutes that I couldn't recreate or re-pronounce. But basically what he wants is to understand financial publishing. Well, I've been in financial publishing for 10 years. I'm like, "Here's how our funnel works," and I tell him about Money Map. I'm like, "Well, here was the front end. We created Money Morning for that because that basically became our own news site, and then we could ... "

At one point, he's like, "Oh, my God, this is brilliant! This is brilliant!" I'm like, "This is the most obvious stuff." Anybody in financial copywriting knows this, but he didn't. He wasn't in that world. He was like, "Well, can you connect me to these guys?" Well, I've written in this space for a long time. I'm like, "Yeah. I can connect you to Mike Ward, and you want to talk to Henry Bingaman, and you want to ... " I just start like pulling in all of my Agora peeps. I'm like, "Yeah, I'm sure they'd be happy to talk to you." He is so grateful at this point, that then he's like, "What can I do for you?"

I am in the middle of looking for partners for the Mentoress Collective. He's sending me questions. We were on the phone for two hours, and I had no idea how big of a millionaire Silicon Valley entrepreneur dude this guy was until I call a friend of mine who has a software company, and I dropped this guy's name. I'm like, "Oh yeah, this guy-" He's like, "Jim? Jim? You were on the phone for two hours? Oh, my God! I tried to get him on my board and he was too busy!" This guy goes completely fanboy. He's like, "Could you ask him if he could call me for just 10 minutes? Or could you send me the recording? Could I just hear what he said?" He's off the chain. I'm like, "Oh my God."

Co-mentoring, you have something of value that somebody else needs. Don't underestimate that. Don't fall into this hierarchy that it's only one way. It's not. What they find is that when you have a co-mentoring relationship, it increases productivity, fulfillment, opportunity. It has greater lifelong impact, which I love. It is better for men and women. Men are more likely to enter into a co-mentoring relationship, and it doesn't get into the power dynamics that, let's face it, did not work very well. Both men and women who participate are more resilient, have clearer priorities, and enjoy more work satisfaction. So that's number one. You have something to offer.

Number two is network-based mentoring. This is developed by Dr. Kerry Ann Rockquemore. She was a university professor. She was one of the first black women to get tenure at her university. So what immediately happened was any young black woman who wanted to be on the tenure track and know how she did that wanted to be mentored by her. All of a sudden, she had 75 people who wanted to be mentored by her, and she couldn't physically or humanly do it. She knew she had to find a better system. So this is what she created. I think it's super powerful. You can Google her. There's several articles that she's written about it. She has an institute I think now that works on it.

What you do is you're going to make a map. You sit down and you map out all the gaps that you want to cover with a mentor. Like I need to know more about funnels, or I need to know about how to deal with burnout, or I need to know how to juggle my life and my childcare. Whatever that piece is, okay, you map that out. But I want you to break it down into what in your mind is a 15-minute conversation. Again, this is not Yoda on your back who knows everything, who's going to save your whole life.

Then you are going to do the opposite. Now you're going to be the ... Oops, shit. Sorry. Generosity, not a performance. You're going to be the mentor, you're going to sit down, and you're going to list all the things you know. Just like me with the millionaire entrepreneur dude, I wouldn't even have thought that the fact that I know anyone who's everyone in the financial publishing industry is a thing, but it's a thing and people want to be introduced to those people. So you're going to list all those things you can offer. Again, think at the level of as far down as you can go for your superpowers.

Then what happens is you make a list. What don't you know? Make a list. Who can you ask? Start to brainstorm. Look at all the people that spoke here. Start to brainstorm. Use your program to make notes as to who knows what that you're going to reach out to. Who can connect you to that person? Maybe

you don't know them, but you say to the woman next to you, "Hey, do you know Jude? Could you introduce me to Jude?" Or you go to Kira, "Hey, could you connect me?" Ask. Ask for that connection. What and who do you know? Make a list. What can you offer? Who can you connect someone to? So if you see someone up here expressing a need or saying they need a connection and you have that connection, reach out and make that connection.

Cindy; I reached out to you the other day because I was like, "Oh, my God. I have a client. They've lost their editor," that I'm like "Who do I know who might know a fabulous ... " I'm like, "Cindy! Cindy knows editors all the time! She works with some." Like, "Who do you know who would be ... " I'm like, "They have to know how to do a promotion, which is different from a book." She's like, "Oh yeah, I've got this one person who might ... " Again, who do you know? How can you connect? That's your give.

When you ask someone to mentor you, this is not, "Save my life!" This is not, "Be my guru!" No, this is, "Do you have 15 minutes for a conversation about X?" It is a very specific, time-bound ask. Who had that great presentation where they said an easy ... What was it? It was like the easiest yes or the easy ... You want to make this the easiest ask, 15 minutes. Can we get on a phone call for 15 minutes? Okay, not save my life, 15 minutes.

All right, when you do that, it's interesting. Here I am. I'm working on this partnership. I have a couple offers for the Mentoress Collective for a partnership, and I'm trying to figure out who should I go with? What should I do? Just by building my network, I have had a conversation with Yanik Silver. Does anybody know Yanik Silver? He's a entrepreneur, works with purpose-driven entrepreneurs. Yanik gave me an hour. Why did he give me an hour? Because when he launched his book, I invited him to come to the Mentoress Collective, and we did a whole fast ride and a training on his Oracle cards and his deck.

I sat with dinner with Kevin Rogers last night. He gave me a whole bunch of mentoring and conversation about who might be a possible partner for me.

Kevin and Rachel [Maza 00:25:20] both came on the Mentoress Collective and shared their experience as partners so that we could offer that to other people like me who are looking for partners.

Millionaire entrepreneur dude is introduced to me by Annie Hyman Pratt who has done multiple trainings in our group. She runs Leading Edge Teams who I met at Brian's Kurtz's mastermind, which is where I met Kira and Rob. So Annie's friends with millionaire entrepreneur dude. She connects him to me. This is how network-based mentoring works. You're going to build this kind of network.

I'm going to move through this next part very quickly, which is people often confuse mentoring and networking. Especially now, this network-based model overlaps, it gets a little fuzzy. There's one thing

you need to know about a key difference between how men and women network that I think is going to help you. This book is great. Barbara Annis is the head of the Gender Intelligence ... Gender intelligence, that's just what it's called. Anyway, she ... all over the world, fortune bazillion-dollar companies, does all kinds of coaching and training. She's got a bunch of books, lovely person. She got introduced to me by the other Silicon Valley dude who was jealous of millionaire entrepreneur dude because he thought we would love to talk about women and mentoring together.

All right, so Barbara Annis says ... This is what you need to know. Women, here's how we network. We go out to lunch. I will know your dog, the ages of your kids, that one has ADHD, where you live, that you're redoing the kitchen, that your tile is going to be pink, and I will never get around to actually saying, "So I run the food marketing club. Do you happen to know any restaurateurs who might need help?" We have to get better at actually asking for those kind of business connections.

It turns out that men are conditioned from birth to do this. If we go golfing together and I'm a dude and you own a trucking company and I'm a beer distributor, at some point, I expect that on the golf course you're going to say, "Hey, you need any trucks for that beer distribution company?" I'm not going to be offended. I'm going to be like, "Oh yeah, I figured you were going to ask me about that. Yeah, let's talk about that."

But what happens is when a dude is networking, a guy is networking with a woman, he's trying to close her right away. Like, "What have you got that could help me?" Like, "How can we do ... " She's like, "You have not even asked about my kid or the color of my tile in the bathroom." So we each have to shift our style a little bit.

Women, we got to get better at asking and here's why, because the statistics are grim. It turns out that women, one of the reasons we are not mentored, and there is a massive mentoring gap, is because we don't ask. Even if we didn't have all these issues with #MeToo, we don't ask. Less than 4 in 10 female executives have ever had a formal mentor, but 7 out of 10 women said they would've been happy to mentor had anyone asked them. So we have to get better at asking.

Why did I start the Mentoress Collective? Because the other thing the research shows is that women need dual networks. There's two studies here that I love. This first one is from Shawn Achor, and he did a SkillPath seminar. It was just a single day. We're talking eight hours, women only. He was a speaker at the SkillPath seminar. He's flying home in the plane and he has the program on his lap because he likes to give it to his mom. So he collects them and he keeps them really nice. He's all excited. He's going to show it to his mom when he gets home. The guy next to him says, "Does that shit really work?" Shawn Achor is so frustrated that he doesn't have anything to say back that he decides to do a study.

So they do a study. They take all the women across all industries. SkillPath is huge. You guys know SkillPath, right? They're huge. He measures ... Now, this is one day, one day of a women-only event. The

women doubled their chances of getting a promotion in the following year, tripled their chances of earning 10% more in the following year, 8 out of 10 were more optimistic about their future, and 7 out of 10 felt more connected.

This is another study that I love. This one comes from Northwestern University in my hometown of Chicago. They took a whole bunch of bright-eyed MBA students who were all ready to tear out into the world, and they took the women who had a co-ed network of super connectors, what we are told is the best, where I'm connected to you and you're connected to 4,000 other big wigs, men and women. For the men, that was gold. As long as they had a co-ed network of super connected peers, it was gold. For women, if they networked like that, they did worse, unless they had a second female-only inner circle. They had to have both. They don't know the reason, they just know the data. But they suspect it's because if you are in a minority position to the culture, you share insider information. Like, are they the kind of company that promotes women? Or is this the kind of place you want ... We're sharing that kind of information with each other, which leads to greater success.

I founded the Mentoreess Collective because I wanted to be that second inner circle that supports women to achieve at the highest level in this industry, which is why I love coming here to talk because I love seeing so many women on this stage. I have to say, everyone else calls me to say, "Do you know a woman who knows about ... I couldn't find anyone who knows search engine optimization to speak ... " I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" I love Rob and Kira. They go, "We have so many women. Do you know any dudes who could talk about this?" I'm like, "I can come up with one." I love it.

To end, we need mentorship. I love this. This is another quote from Russell Brand. " ... because without it, we will go round and round the track of our neuroses like an Indie 500 racers with a checkered past and no checkered flag. We cannot see the way ourselves because the instrument of observation is the problem."

So I believe we all have an obligation to pay it forward, to mentor others. My sponsor who mentored me through these last 10 years with my son, who allowed me to keep my business, who taught me how to care for myself, now she and others in this industry know to send me women who have children who are struggling with mental illness or addiction.

I have a young woman, her child is non-binary, which the mental healthcare system totally doesn't know what to do with that. So we now have a system where she texts me and we go back and forth. She knows I'm listening. She knows I can't solve the problem, but that I'm witnessing, that I'm here to help. I can give her little tips that have worked for me. We are doing that back and forth for each other. That's what it means to pay it forward. Take what you know, take what you've learned. Trust me, there is something valuable, I don't care if you're 10 days in this industry or 20 years, and use that to pay it forward to another man or woman in business because I believe we all rise together. Thank you.