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Mentoring Manual

(American Speech-Language Hearing Association)

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Mentoring Manual

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The Basics

Individuals should have more than one mentor in our fast-changing world including a senior mentor within their organization, peer mentors, and mentors outside the organization. Source: Academy of Management Review, 2001

What is Mentoring?

We all have a need for insight that is outside of our normal life and educational experience. The power of mentoring is that it creates a one-of-a-kind opportunity for collaboration, goal achievement, and problem solving.

Mentoring is a developmental partnership through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information, and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else.

Types of Mentoring

- **Informal**—This is what most people think of when they think of mentoring: a spontaneous, casual relationship where a senior person takes a junior person “under his or her wing” and provides long-term guidance and counsel. Yet many people who want mentors do not have them. The desire to give everyone access to mentoring has led many organizations to start “formal” or structured mentoring programs.
- **Structured**—Structured mentoring programs are designed to create a culture where people can proactively support the development of one another. In these programs, mentors are generally matched with mentees to support specific goals such as leadership development, diversity, or retention.

Mentoring can be delivered:

- **One-on-one**, typically with a more senior person mentoring a less senior individual, or in small teams.
- **In teams** consisting of peers with different backgrounds and skills mentoring each other or a small group matched with a more senior person. Peer mentoring teams are effective since they are based on the concept of mutual benefit; participants receive support and advice as they provide support and advice for others.

Mentoring works best when it focuses on the entire person versus focusing on skill development alone. Source: Harvard Business Review

Benefits of Mentoring

Most mentoring programs are designed for the benefit of mentees, and they encourage participants to come into a relationship with specific goals and expectations. The benefits of mentoring, however, often extend far beyond the relationship's initial purpose and affect everyone involved: mentees, mentors, and the organization.

Benefits for Mentees

- Access to a support system during critical stages of college and career development
- Insider perspective on navigating their chosen career
- Clear understanding and enhancement of academic and career development plans
- Ability to develop mentoring relationships in industries where mentoring is not readily available
- Enhanced understanding of the importance of mentors
- Exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences
- Direct access to power resources within the professions of audiology; speech-language pathology; and speech, language, and hearing science
- Identification of skill gaps before leaving school
- Greater knowledge of career success factors
- A lasting career network

Benefits for Mentors

- Exposure to the emerging talent pool
- Ongoing attention to mentor's own career development
- Satisfaction from imparting wisdom and experience to others in the profession without a huge time commitment
- Enhancement of coaching, mentoring, leadership, and management skills
- Chance to be exposed to a diversity of thought, style, personality, and culture
- A way to recruit employees for the mentor's industry/company
- Feedback loop to students and school regarding curriculum needs
- Greater knowledge of recruiting success factors
- A way to "give back" to their association
- A lasting career network

It is the third most powerful relationship for influencing human behavior (after the family and couple relationships) if it is working. Source: Richard E. Caruso, PhD

Roles of the Mentee and Mentor

Role of the Mentee

As a mentee, you will play many different roles during the course of your mentoring relationship. The following are some important roles for you to keep in mind:

Driver of Relationship

- Identify the skills, knowledge, and/or goals that you want to achieve and communicate them to your mentor
- Bring up new topics that are important to you at any point and give feedback to your mentor

Development Planner

- Maintain a mentoring plan and work with your mentor to set up goals, developmental activities, and time frames

Resource Partner

- Work with your mentor to seek resources for learning; identify people and information that might be helpful

Teacher

- Look for opportunities to give back to your mentor; share any information that you think might be valuable

Continuous Learner

- Take full advantage of this opportunity to learn

Role of the Mentor

As a mentor, your primary role is to provide guidance and support to your mentee based on his or her unique developmental needs. At different points in the relationship, you will take on some or all of the following roles:

Coach/Advisor

- Give advice and guidance, share ideas, and provide feedback
- Share information on “unwritten rules for success” within environment/organization

Source of Encouragement/Support

- Act as sounding board for ideas/concerns about school/career choices; provide

- insights into possible opportunities
- Provide support on personal issues if appropriate

Resource Person

- Identify resources to help mentee enhance personal development and career growth
- Expand the mentee's network of contacts

Champion

- Serve as advocate for mentee whenever opportunity presents itself
- Seek opportunities for increased visibility for mentee

Devil's Advocate

- When appropriate, play devil's advocate to help mentee think through important decisions and strategies.

It is the second most important factor after education in determining a person's professional success. Source: Korn/Ferry International

General Rules to Remember

Each mentee should be able to make progress toward meeting unique goals, and each mentor should be able to use his/her strengths. No two people will get the same benefits. S.T.E.P. 1:1 program participants have a structured monitoring and evaluation process. Every mentoring relationship, structured or informal; senior, peer, or team should abide by a few simple rules:

1. Confidentiality

If you want to build a trusting relationship with your mentee, it is critical that you maintain confidentiality. If the mentee gives you permission to share information, this is not an issue. You must remember that anything you are told in confidence cannot be shared.

2. No-Fault End of Relationship

It is rare that people want to end a relationship. Try to resolve concerns and conflicts early on, so problems that can derail your progress don't have a chance to fester. If you do have to end the relationship, be professional and discuss the termination. It may be slightly uncomfortable, but it is important to honor and respect each other.

3. Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation Process

Mentors and mentees should create simple benchmarks for evaluating the success of your mentoring relationship. Check in with each other, and don't assume that if things are working for you, everything is fine with your mentor/mentee.

Employees who have had mentors earn between \$5,610 and \$22,450 more a year than employees who have not had mentors. Source: Business Finance Magazine, 2000

Guidelines for Mentoring Success

- Be sure you are clear on such terms as how often you will communicate; whether it will be by phone, e-mail, or both; how quickly you will respond; and confidentiality.
- Make contact frequently, especially during the first few weeks, to build a trusting relationship.
- Respect your mentee/mentor's experience and views even if you don't agree.
- Follow up when you make a commitment to get information, take action, etc.
- Don't ever leave your mentor hanging. If you don't respond, the mentor will feel that he/she wasn't helpful. You never want to leave someone who has volunteered to help with this kind of impression.
- Don't ever leave your mentee hanging. If you don't respond, the mentee will feel rejected and disappointed. You never want to leave someone who has asked for mentoring assistance feeling uncertain about the relationship.
- Be appreciative of whatever you get from your mentee/mentor; learn his or her strengths and seek or offer advice in these areas.
- Work hard to make the relationship a two-way street. This means you should always be on the lookout for information/resources that might be of interest to your mentee/mentor (e.g., articles you read or information you come across).
- Be flexible and enjoy the experience

Getting Started

Starting Your Relationship—A Mentee's Point of View

It is normal to feel a little nervous when you are meeting your mentor for the first time. The following are some suggestions for your first meeting, be it face-to-face, on the phone, or online:

- Jot down a few discussion ideas before your first meeting. Keep adding to your list as you better understand what you can gain from your mentor.
- Share something about your personal background and interests, such as how you got interested in a particular field/major, where you are from, and life balance issues.
- Demonstrate interest in your mentor's career. A few questions you might want to ask are
 - Why are you interested in mentoring?
 - How did you choose your college/field?
 - What do you consider your greatest strengths?
- Agree on ground rules about how often you will communicate, how quickly you will be able to respond, and what level of confidentiality is expected.
- Complete the Ground Rules questions
- Set up a date for your next meeting or phone call.

Starting Your Relationship—A Mentor's Point of View

It is normal to feel a little unsure of things when you are meeting your mentee for the first time. The following are some suggestions for your first meeting, be it face- to-face, on the phone, or online:

- Share your background, including some information on why you made some important life and career choices. Try to share something about a difficult time in your career, so your mentee will be comfortable sharing similar information.
- Explain why you were interested in being a mentor. Ask your mentee what he or she is looking for in a mentor.
- Ask a few questions about your mentee's current experience, such as,
 - Why did you choose this field?
 - What are some short-term goals for you?
 - What skills do you most want to develop in terms of future personal and professional growth?
- Agree on ground rules about how often you will communicate, how quickly you will be able to respond, and what level of confidentiality is expected.
- Complete the Ground Rules questions.
- Set up a date for your next meeting or phone call.

Setting the Ground Rules

After getting acquainted, mentees and mentors should agree on some ground rules for the relationship. The following are important considerations:

1. How often will we try to communicate? (Should be at least once per month and preferably more at the beginning.) Will it be by phone, e-mail, or face- to-face?
2. What days/times work best?
3. Each person's role.
4. Expectations about the way the two of you will communicate.
5. What each person is hoping to gain from the relationship.

Tips on Virtual Relationships

Email is a fast, easy, and inexpensive way to communicate with your mentor. Make your relationship as productive as possible.

Share

- Work hard to give your mentor a sense of yourself; share things that are important to you both at school and in your personal life.
- Frequency of contact is important, especially in the first few months. It will help you move beyond small talk and show that you want to discuss a variety of issues.
- E-mails can be supplemented with phone calls whenever you feel it is important to talk. Talking will definitely add a new dimension to your relationship if it's possible.

Initiate

- Play host, not guest! As the one seeking advice, it's easy to see yourself as the "guest" in this relationship, but guests are often passive. Remember that this program is an opportunity for you. If you're going to get what you want, you need to be the "host": Initiate conversations, start another topic if a discussion seems to be dying out, and give your mentor feedback about what is most helpful.
- Show enthusiasm! In emails, this means giving thoughtful answers, thanking your mentor for sharing ideas, using exclamation points when appropriate, giving feedback, and telling him or her that you're enjoying the experience.
- If you don't hear from your mentor, don't hesitate to send her or him another email in a few weeks asking what's new and sharing what you've been doing.

Monitor

- Keep copies of all conversations. This will help you evaluate the experience and will enable you to go back and follow up on earlier discussions.
- Be aware of mirroring! If you write short, quick answers, your mentor is likely to respond with short answers. If you are open and go into more depth, your mentor will probably follow your lead.
- Don't feel you have to start a new conversation each time; tell your mentor what has happened since your last conversation.
- If you don't have time for a thoughtful reply, send a quick note saying when you will be able to respond. Don't leave your mentor wondering if he or she did something wrong.

Mentoring and Coaching Skills

Many people, even senior-level executives, have never learned how to be an effective mentor and coach. Mentoring is not simply answering questions and giving advice; it requires a unique set of skills and practice. A mentor needs to

1. Create an open and supportive climate for discussion.

Seek to develop trust by encouraging open, two-way communications; this often means sharing personal experiences or difficult times you went through so that the mentee knows she or he can discuss tough issues.

- Respect the mentee's individuality. Your mentee may or may not have a similar style.
- Be patient if your mentee seems unfocused—help her or him focus by presenting and discussing options.
- Make it clear that you hope to learn from this experience.

2. Demonstrate good listening/follow-up skills.

Most of us need to improve our listening skills; we tend to talk more than we listen and to interrupt people more than we should.

- Ask open-ended questions to get your mentee to open up as much as possible
- After you have listened fully to a response, ask good follow-up questions to demonstrate genuine interest.
- If you do not understand something, try to paraphrase it to be sure you understand what the person is trying to say. (*Example: So what I think you're saying is that you want to broaden your knowledge of opportunities...*)
- After you've discussed an issue in one conversation, be sure to ask how the situation has progressed next time you write an e-mail or talk.
- Don't assume that what worked for you will work for your mentee; rather, try saying something like, "My experience was....What do you think will work for you?"

3. Provide constructive feedback and advice.

It is important for you to match the degree of openness of your mentee. **Do not** give negative feedback until you have built a strong relationship and the mentee is ready to receive it.

- Give a balance of both praise and constructive feedback on how to improve.
- Always focus on behaviors that can be changed (not personality traits!) and behaviors that are appropriate within the organization/field/environment.

- Let your mentee set the initial goals and then give feedback and suggestions.
- Help your mentee make goals specific and realistic with target dates; monitor progress, help her/him/them adapt plans when necessary, and provide ongoing encouragement.
- Do problem solving with your mentee when issues/barriers arise. Do not feel that you have to have all the answers but rather help your mentee think through strategies and options.
- Consider and discuss additional ways for your mentee to get advice and information he or she needs. Call on other mentors/colleagues when appropriate and try to help your mentee widen his or her network.

Characteristics of Excellent Mentors

Think about the traits and the questions, so that you can assess your own mentoring skills.

- Good listener/sounding board
- Knowledgeable
- Nonjudgmental
- Able to give constructive feedback
- Honest and candid
- Able to network and find resources
- Successful in career
- Willing/able to devote time to developing others
- Eager to learn

Do a self-assessment and know what you are offering to your mentee and what you expect of yourself.

- What are my strengths as a mentor?
- What are my challenges as a mentor?
- In what ways can I compensate for my mentoring weaknesses (e.g., books, training, advice from good role model)?

Evaluation

Giving Effective Feedback—A Two-Way Street

Mentors: It is important to be able to give your mentee feedback on how the relationship is progressing.

Mentees: It is also important for you to know how to receive feedback well, as this is the way you will grow and learn.

Few people are able to give feedback well; most people give primarily negative or primarily positive feedback. It is also difficult for many people to receive feedback. When they receive positive feedback, they are embarrassed and discredit it. When they receive negative feedback, most become defensive.

Good feedback is a gift. It is hard for anybody to improve without it. If we do not understand our strengths and developmental needs, it is hard to know how to develop and learn.

Effective Feedback Is...

- given for a good reason
- specific and descriptive
- relevant
- about behavior that can be changed
- given at appropriate time (usually right after observation but in appropriate setting)
- open to discussion
- a balance of positive and negative

How to Provide Effective Feedback

- Do not attempt to give feedback until you have established the correct climate: a strong, trusting relationship.
- Explain that the purpose of feedback is to share perceptions of what is currently working, not working, and to try to improve and learn.
- Give feedback only after using good listening skills to understand the other's perspective.

Dealing with Possible Problems

In some mentoring relationships, things do not go exactly as planned or expected. Try to remedy problems as soon as possible.

Poor Chemistry

It is not realistic to expect every mentor and mentee to instantaneously bond and become very close. If you do not feel comfortable discussing some issues with your mentor, try to focus on what you can learn from that person and look for other informal mentors for other needs.

Unrealistic Expectations for Mentors or Mentees

Occasionally, mentors expect too much from mentees; both parties need to realize that the other person is busy and be appreciative of whatever they get from the relationship. You should not expect your mentor to “make your career” or give you all the answers. Mentors are one source of advice and encouragement; no one should rely on one person for everything.

Lack of Commitment

If your mentor seems unresponsive for a long period of time, send another email assuming he/she is just busy. If you still don't get a response, then write or call again, asking if something is wrong.

Jealousy on the Part of Others

Occasionally, someone else (another student or someone you work with) may hear about the great things a mentee is getting from their mentoring experience. We encourage you to share whatever you are discussing with your mentee/mentor; this will reduce jealousy and increase the sharing.