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**RMA 14ers Club**

**Mentor’s Resource Guide**

* **The Role and Traits of Excellent Mentors**
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* **What to do When Things Go Wrong**
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**The Role and Traits of Excellent Mentors**

Many people feel that being a mentor requires special skills, but mentors are simply people who have the qualities of good role models. There are however common qualities that make a good role model and thus a successful mentor. Successful mentors demonstrate and practice many of the following characteristics:

* **Personal commitment to be involved with another person for an extended period of time** **- generally, one year at minimum.** Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people’s lives, to help them with tough decisions and to see them become the best they can be. They have to be invested in the mentoring relationship over the long haul to be there long enough to make a difference.This also means that mentors are willing to make themselves available as a resource and a sounding board.
* **Respect for individuals and for their abilities and their right to make their own choices in life.** Mentors are there to guide their mentees and help them make their own life decisions, never to push them. Mentors should not approach the mentee with the attitude that their own ways are better or that participants need to be rescued. Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their mentees and the privilege of being advisors to them.
* **The ability to listen and to accept different points of view.** Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It is much harder to find someone who will suspend their own personal judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts with a minimum of interference. When people feel accepted, they are more likely to ask for and respond to good ideas.Mentors also demonstrate true listening skills, by maintaining eye contact and give mentees their full attention.
* **The ability to empathize with another person’s struggles.** Effective mentors can feel with people without feeling pity for them. Even without having had the same life experiences, they can empathize with their mentee’s feelings and personal problems. Simultaneously, mentors continue to encourage mentors them to learn and improve; no matter how painful the mentee’s experience.
* **The ability to see solutions and opportunities as well as barriers.** Effective mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.
* **Flexibility and openness.** Effective mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to their mentees (music, styles, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by their relationship.
* **Practical and insightful.** They give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities. Mentors use their personal experience to help their mentees avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions. Mentors educate about life and their own successes.
* **Willing to provide constructive feedback.** When necessary, mentors point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the mentee’s behavior, never their character. Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved and the benefits of various actions.
* **Demonstrate success and are admirable.** Mentors not only are successful themselves, but they also foster success in others. Mentors are usually well respected in their organizations and in the community, and willing to help other achieve the same without a sense of competition. A mentor’s admiration comes not only from their successes, but also from demonstration of high ethical standards.
* **Have a sense of humor.** Good mentors are able to laugh at themselves as a means of modeling humility and perspective. They are able to effectively use humor to help mentees during difficult times.
* **Caring.** Above all else, mentors truly care about their mentees’ progress in educational and career planning, as well as their personal development. This willingness to enter into a caring relationship is what makes a truly successful experience for both the mentee and the mentor. If done successfully, a mentor will make it seem as if the mentee is the only thing that matters and that the mentor has all the time in the world to devote to the mentee with their undivided attention.

**Mentor Guidelines and Code of Conduct**

Becoming a mentor can be one of life’s most rewarding and fulfilling experiences. The commitment indicates ones believe in others. Mentors recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that they accepted in choosing to work with mentees and emerging professionals and agree to interact appropriately with their mentee according to the highest ethical standards at all times.

**The Role of a Mentor:**

* At the initial stages of the match, the mentee may appear to be hesitant, unresponsive, and unappreciative of the mentor relationship. This guarded attitude is simply a manifestation of their insecurity about the relationship. The mentee’s attitude will gradually take a positive turn as they realize the mentor’s sincerity about being a friend. Mentors should be patient! They should not try to speed up the process by going out of the way to accommodate the mentee beyond reasonable expectations.
* Remember that the mentor - mentee relationship has an initial phase. During this phase the mentee is more interested in getting to know how “real” the mentor is and how much the mentor can be trusted. Mentors should establish how to be reached by the mentee: by phone, e-mail, or fax or at a designated meeting location. Experience proves that calling or e-mailing the mentee at work is usually the best way to make contact, although today’s social media may change that perception. The mentor should establish a time and phone number where they can usually answer calls or make contact. Mentees need encouragement to leave voicemail or email messages to confirm meetings as well as to cancel them.
* Mentors should not try to be a teacher, parent, disciplinarian, therapist, Santa Claus or babysitter. Experience demonstrates it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependable, consistent friend. Mentors should present information carefully without distortion and give all points of view a fair hearing. They should listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgment. It is important not criticize or preach. Think of ways to problem solve together rather than lecturing or telling the mentee what to do. Never “should have” the mentee.
* Mentors should respect the uniqueness and honor the integrity of the mentee and influence them through constructive feedback. The mentor empowers the mentee to make right decisions without actually deciding for the mentee. Mentors should identify the mentee’s interests and take them seriously. Mentors should be alert for opportunities and teaching moments, and explore positive and negative consequences.
* While engaging in one-on-one interactions with mentees, mentors should touch on topics such as:
	+ Sharpening the mentee’s focus to move more effectively towards their goals;
	+ Enhancing specific performance skills that will assist the mentee to move continuously in the right direction, reaching higher challenges and accomplishments; and,
	+ Identifying behavior and communication patterns essential for career success.
* The mentor is not expected to be all knowing in all areas. Their role is to function as a catalyst and together with their mentee should develop reasonable, achievable and mutually agreeable goals.
* The mentor should encourage independent thinking. The mentee should not feel obligated to do things exactly the way the mentor does things, or follow the mentor’s precise advice. Once mentored, the mentee may ultimately make decisions that are different from what might have discussed. The ultimate goal is for the mentee to excel beyond what the mentor was able to accomplish, thus promoting progress.
* Mentors set realistic expectations and goals for the mentee and make achievement for them fun. Remember there is a big difference between encouraging and demanding. Encourage the mentee to complete their educational or professional goals; provide access to varying points of view. Mentors assist the mentee in making the connection between their actions of today and the dreams and goals of tomorrow. Mentors should not get discouraged if the mentee is not making great improvements. Mentors have a great deal of impact and it is not always immediately evident. Be certain to look for incremental signs.
* As a friend the mentor can share and advise, but they should know their limitations. Some problems, and especially personal problems that the mentee may share, may best be handled by other professionals. If the mentor has any concerns, they should contact the mentor coordinator immediately.

**Phases of a Mentoring Relationship**

**Phase 1: The Beginning - Developing Rapport and Building Trust**

The “getting to know you” phase is the most critical phase of the mentoring relationship. Things to expect and work on during Phase 1 include:

* **Predictability and consistency -** During the first phase of the relationship, it is critical to be both predictable and consistent. If the mentor schedules an appointment to meet their mentee at a certain time, it is important to keep it. It is understandable that at times things come up and appointments cannot be kept. However, in order to speed up the trust-building process, consistency is necessary, even if the mentee is not as consistent as the mentor.
* **Testing -** Mentees to not automatically always trust mentors. As a result, they use testing as a coping or defense mechanism to determine whether they can trust the mentor. They will test to see if the mentor really cares about them. A mentee might test the mentor by not showing up for a scheduled meeting to see how the mentor will react.
* **Establish confidentiality -** During the first phase of the relationship, it is important to establish confidentiality with the mentee. This helps develop trust. The mentor should let the mentee know that whatever they want to share with the mentor will remain confidential, unless there are extenuating circumstances. It is helpful to stress this up front, within the first few meetings with the mentee. That way, later down the road, if a mentor needs to break the confidence, the mentee will not feel betrayed.
* **Goal setting** (transitions into Phase 2) - It is helpful during Phase 1 to take the time to set at least one achievable goal together for the relationship. It is also good to help the mentee set personal goals and develop a plan to bring them to fruition.

**Phase 2: The Middle - Achieving Goals**

Once trust has been established, the relationship moves into Phase 2. During this phase, the mentor and mentee can begin to start working toward the goals they set during the first phase of the relationship.

Things to expect during Phase 2 include:

* **Closeness** - Generally, during the second phase the mentor and mentee can sense a genuine closeness in the relationship.
* **Affirming the uniqueness of the relationship** - Once the relationship has reached this stage, it is helpful to do something special or different from what the mentor and mentee did during the first phase, which helps affirm the uniqueness of the relationship. For example, discuss things that are not directly related to work or the program goals, take time to get to know each other as individuals, etc.
* **The relationship may be rocky or smooth** - All relationships have their ups and downs. Once the relationship has reached the second phase, there will still be some rough periods. Mentors should be prepared and not assume that something is wrong with the relationship if this happens. Rely on the program coordinator’s support if needed.

**Phase 3: The Ending – Ensuring Closure and Saying Goodbye**

If the rough period continues or if a mentor feels that the pair has not reached the second phase, the mentor should not hesitate to seek support from the mentoring program coordinator. Sometimes two people, no matter how they look on paper, just do not “click.” Some mentor/mentee pairs do not need to worry about this phase until farther down the road, near the end of a successful mentoring experience. However, at some point all relationships will come to an end - whether it is because the program is over, the mentor is moving or for some other reason. When this happens, it is critical that the closure phase not be overlooked. Many people today have already had influential people come and go in their lives and are very rarely provided the opportunity to say a proper goodbye.

* **Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial and resentment.** In order to help mentees express emotions about the relationship ending, mentors should model appropriate behavior.
* **Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful and affirming way.** Mentors should not wait for the very last meeting with their mentees to say goodbye. The mentor should slowly bring it up as soon as they become aware that the relationship will be coming to a close.
* **Address appropriate situations for staying in touch.** Mentors should check with the mentoring program coordinator to find out the policy for staying in touch with their mentees once the program has come to an end. If mentors and mentees are mutually interested in continuing their relationship, they may be allowed to, but with the understanding that the mentoring program coordinator may no longer be monitoring the relationship.

**When Things Go Wrong**

Mentorships are special relationships. Few things in life compare to the dynamics that exist between a mentor and mentee. But mentorships are similar to other relationships in one important respect: they are imperfect and subject to human frailties. Some mentorship relationships become riddled by conflict, dissatisfaction, or result in disturbing endings. Some become unhealthy, dysfunctional, and even emotionally or physically destructive. This is the dark side of mentoring that some mentors do not always want to face.

Mentors should be open to the possibility that things can go wrong. Because of their inherent imperfections and those of their mentees, mentors need to be alert to situations and interactions that might undermine their relationships. If things go wrong, they must address the problems quickly and attempt to restore the relationship. How do mentors know when their relationships are in trouble? Among the many warning signs, three stand out as prominent.

* The mentee or mentor does not believe some of their important developmental or professional needs are being met.
* The mentee or mentor senses that the costs of the relationship outweigh the benefits.
* The mentee or mentor feels distressed or harmed by the relationship.

A substantial body of research shows that when mentees and mentors feel disenchanted, upset, or that they have been harmed in mentorships, they often report some casual problems or events. Specific causes include poor matching between mentor and mentee (i.e., dissimilar backgrounds, interests, personality style), faulty communication, incongruent expectations, role conflicts (i.e., evaluative/supervisory versus helping roles), exploitation, abandonment or neglect, mentor incompetence (technically or relationally), philosophical differences, boundary violations, problematic attraction, and unresolved disputes.

Although all mentors and mentorships are imperfect, competent mentors accept the reality of their own imperfection and diligently work to detect and address early on any indicators of distress and dissatisfaction they sense in their relationships with their mentee. This section discusses several key elements for handling mentorship difficulties. The ultimate focus is on restoration and mentors should take the lead in restoring relationships. Remember, not all relationships work out initially and learning to deal with this reality is part of the professional maturity process. However, when a mentorship cannot be restored or when the continuing relationship is not in the mentee’s best interest, mentors must take the lead in responsibly ending the relationship.

**First Do No Harm**

Mentors may not be able to fix every problem in their mentorships. Some problems are just too big, deep, or serious to handle. As much as possible, though, they can minimize the damage. The medical profession understands the importance of damage control. Physicians the world over swear by the Hippocratic Oath, which begins with the sage warning: “First, do no harm.”

Avoiding harm is called non-maleficence. It is the most fundamental ethical obligation mentors have to their mentees. Non-maleficence also may be the most difficult ethical obligation to uphold. A souring mentorship can get extremely complicated, befuddling even the most astute mentor. There are numerous ways to harm a mentee. Certainly, a mentee can be harmed emotionally or physically. An angry tirade, bitter criticism, or chronic disparagement laced with profanity will take a toll on even the most resilient mentee. More often, however, harm accrues insidiously, at times without conscious awareness. When a mentee is neglected and ignored, tasked with challenges for which they are ill-prepared, sacrificed on the altar of organizational politics, or forced to relinquish creativity and individuality to appease the mentor, a mentee is ultimately harmed.

**How do mentors avoid harm?**

1. First, as the primary power-holder in the mentorship, mentors own the responsibility for ensuring that the mentorship benefits (versus harms) the mentee. They do not turn that responsibility over to the mentee.
2. Second, mentors must set as priority the professional and developmental needs of the mentee. Certainly, mentors do not deny their own needs. They simply do not allow mentoring to become “win-lose” - the mentor winning and the mentee losing.
3. Third, mentors continue to treat mentees with dignity, respect, and compassion even when the mentee disappoints them. Particularly when a mentor feels wronged or disappointed, it may be easy to unwittingly step out of the professional role and cause harm to the mentee through an angry outburst or sudden abandonment. If a mentor becomes personally impacted or outraged such that respect gives way to disrespect, the mentor more than likely should stop mentoring.
4. Finally, mentors stay committed to the mentee but accountable to the organization. They serve the mentee’s best interests and they remain loyal and truthful to them. At the same time, they uphold obligations imposed by the sponsoring organization or profession. For example, a manager in an assigned mentorship would work to provide objective evaluations of a mentee and perhaps arrange for a smooth transfer when it becomes clear that the relationship is either unhelpful or destructive.

**Slow the Process Down**

When things go wrong, the events that take place can feel like they are on fast forward. Dominos of emotion and reaction cascade right in front of you. Before you realize what is really taking place, problems in the mentorship escalate, unanticipated and deep emotions surface, and both parties begin to question how they ever got into the situation in the first place. In this atmosphere of turbulence, mentors cannot afford to have knee-jerk reactions or brush the problems aside. Neither is acceptable. Before they do anything, mentors should take time to cool off and deliberately engage in thoughtful reflection, analysis, and consultation.

When mentors have quick and thoughtless responses to conflict or dysfunctional mentee behavior, the reactions may worsen the already tenuous situation. When mentors avoid addressing difficulties with mentees, these reactions may also exacerbate conflict and ultimately ensure the demise of the mentorship. Common forms of dysfunctional mentor behavior include both self-defeating provocation and self-defeating passivity.

The provocative mentor swiftly vents anger and frustration in a highly emotional and accusing manner - typically ensuring that the mentee responds in kind or emotionally withdraws from the mentorship. Furthermore, some mentors become active saboteurs; they betray the mentee or seek to harm them professionally as a means of exacting revenge.

The passively self-defeating mentor may engage in one of three unhelpful responses in the face of negative emotion or conflict. These include:

* Paralysis - the mentor freezes and fails to respond at all;
* Distancing - the mentor intentionally disengages from the relationship and avoids the mentee altogether; and
* Appeasement - the mentor passively capitulates, giving the mentee whatever they demand in hopes of diffusing conflict and restoring equilibrium.

Each of these provocative and passive reactions is ultimately destined to worsen mentorship dysfunction and none offer the mentee an adaptive example of professional conflict management.

Instead of responding impulsively or avoiding problems altogether, effective mentors engage in a deliberate process of analysis, reflection, and when needed, consultation. They begin by listening carefully to the mentee’s concerns or exploring the source of their own dissatisfaction or anger. They then consider their obligations to the mentee (e.g., do no harm and serve the mentee’s best interests) and whether any ethical or professional standards have a bearing on the situation. Most importantly, the wise mentor uses this self-reflective time to honestly evaluate their own contribution to the current dysfunction; how has the mentor’s behavior shaped the current state of affairs? When the causes of mentorship disturbance are clarified and the best interests of the mentee considered, the mentor explores possible solutions and the potential consequences of each. Ultimately, the mentor decides on a course of action they deem most likely to further the growth and development of the mentee while simultaneously resolving or reducing the current relationship disturbance.

**Tell the Truth**

When things go wrong with a mentee, a mentor can always make things worse. The mentor could decide to not discuss the problem, address it superficially, or be untruthful. All of these tactics are really forms of avoidance. But a mentor should always try to make things better.

Just as mentors must take the lead in clarifying expectations with the mentee early in the relationship, they must take responsibility for alerting the mentee to early signs of relationship and performance problems. The alert should be direct and constructive. When a mentor avoids communicating complaints to the mentee they begin to harbor a hidden agenda - one that is likely to re-emerge in the form of neglect or hostility. When a mentor attempts to communicate concerns about the mentee through subtle innuendo or nonverbal cues, the mentor is actually acting as an enabler of a dysfunctional and stagnant mentorship. Obviously, a mentor should model an appropriate strategy by being an agent of positive change and health.

Some mentors find honesty difficult, especially when it requires delivery of unfavorable feedback. In fact, some deeply caring and technically competent mentors are chronically dishonest in this regard. They withhold critical feedback - information that is often essential for growth, change, and long-term success. Whether phobic about confrontation, fearful of hurting feelings, or anxious about rejection, these mentors fail at truth-telling and do a profound disservice to those they mentor. Inadvertently, they allow self-defeating mentee behavior to continue and they worsen existing mentorship problems.

Experience suggests and research confirms that when a mentor - mentee pair experience conflict, resentment, or dissatisfaction, the relationship is most likely to be restored and strengthened when the mentor expresses concerns about the problem. For such overt and clear communication to be successful, the mentor must typically plan the meeting or discussion with the mentee. When confrontation is required, it behooves the mentor to remain both kind and concrete. This should hold true even when confronting a mentee for significant errors, performance difficulties, or disloyal behavior. The wise mentor balances confrontation with compassion. Before launching into the mentee’s problem areas, mentors typically begin a confrontational meeting with some reflection on the mentee’s strengths and assets. This approach helps mentors convey a balanced picture of the mentee.

**Seek Consultation**

Mentors who seek consultation from trusted colleagues are consistently likely to make better decisions than those who do not. They are more inclined to proceed ethically and professionally in a troubling or challenging mentorship. When choosing a consultant, look for a seasoned colleague known for a strong commitment to the profession, sensitivity to ethical matters, and a reputation for being both forthright and discrete. The last quality is important in safeguarding confidentiality in mentorships. Your success as a mentor will hinge on your reputation for protecting the privacy and confidence of your mentees. Therefore, exercise discretion regarding with whom you consult. Also, protect the anonymity of the mentee when this is warranted. One safeguard is to select a consultant in a different organization or distant geographic location. In smaller organizations, this may be the only way to really protect mentee confidence.

**Dispute Irrational Thinking**

In spite of the human proclivity for irrational self-disturbance, excellent mentors adopt several strategies for minimizing the negative impact of irrational thinking. Mentor coping strategies include:

1. Acknowledging disturbance and upset while searching for one’s contributing irrational demands and evaluations;
2. Actively disputing or challenging mentor related irrational beliefs in front of one’s mentees (e.g., “You know, when you neglected to turn in that report as promised, I really got myself enraged at first. Then I realized I was crazily demanding that you be perfect. Now I’m just a bit annoyed and wondering how I can help you get that report wrapped up”);
3. Mentors must refuse to tell themselves that anything a mentee does (or fails to do) is awful;
4. Carefully separate human worth (the mentor’s and the mentee’s) from performance; and
5. Frequently and humorously find opportunities to display personal fallibility (thus providing a good model of human imperfection for the mentee).

In review, mentors should be open to the possibility that things can go wrong. If so, the mentor should:

1. Above all, do no harm;
2. Slow down the process;
3. Tell the truth;
4. Seek consultation; and
5. Dispute irrational thinking.

**Welcoming Change and Saying Goodbye**

**Matters of Closure**

At some point all relationships will come to an end - whether it is because the program is over, the mentor is moving or for some other reason. When this happens, it is critical that the closure stage not be overlooked. Healthy closure of a mentorship is important for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentors sometimes fail to understand the necessity of planning to end the mentorship on a positive note or actively avoid the pain and sadness that sometimes accompany saying goodbye. Because relationship endings can be painful - particularly when a mentor and mentee have become closely bonded and the relationship is especially meaningful - the intuitive human response is to avoid the discomfort of loss. There are three primary reasons why mentors fail at this task. First, many people never had graceful endings modeled in their own relationships with mentors. As a result, they do not have a picture of how a healthy ending looks. Second, many people come from family and cultural backgrounds where denial of endings is the norm. When a close friend moves away, people are comfortable saying “see you around” and then they get back to work. Finally, some mentors simply find it threatening when a mentee leaves. As the mentee pulls away and disengages, mentors may have a host of reactions, including self-protective anger or reactive disengagement. This may bring otherwise good mentorships to pathetic termination.

Mindful mentors understand the importance of preparing for meaningful closure of the mentorship. They come to celebrate mentee transitions. Rather than allowing a long-term mentor relationship to end suddenly or fade away unacknowledged, because of their appreciation of the redefinition phase, good mentors actively arrange opportunities and venues for open discussion that brings meaningful closure for both parties. Great mentors find ways to honor and mark the mentee’s increasing autonomy, the decreasing intensity of the mentorship, and the pending end of the mentorship’s active phase. A self-aware mentor might express gratitude for the privilege of knowing the mentee, sadness at seeing the mentee move on, and deep satisfaction at the mentee’s competence and confidence. When a mentor models open acknowledgment of relational transitions and endings, mentees are blessed. Permission is granted for the mentee to move on. Such experiences are deeply meaningful to mentees and reaffirm the value of the mentorship for the long term.

**Welcome Change and Growth**

All relationships evolve and change. By their nature, mentorships are developmental relationships, focused on the transition of the mentee from neophyte to a fully functional independent member of a profession or organization. Although growth and change are the very essence of mentoring, some pain and adjustment inevitably accompany mentorship transitions. One time when pain is particularly noticeable is when the mentee begins the process of separating from the mentor. Both parties may experience turmoil, anxiety, loss, and general disruption. Either party may consciously or unconsciously resist the change - clinging to the way things used to be. For example, in an effort to preserve a valued relationship, a mentor may ignore the fundamental ethical requirement to promote mentee autonomy and independence, opting instead to foster dependency and withhold endorsement of the mentee’s competence. There are commonly three phases of mentorship development. Excellent mentors should become familiar with these phases, understand the unique needs of mentee in each phase, and acknowledge and welcome transition to a new phase.

The first phase of mentorship development, initiation, is marked by excitement, possibility, and beginning. The mentee often feels anxious, overwhelmed and quite dependent on the mentor. New mentees may feel unqualified and inadequate professionally. Although mentees usually are open to feedback, are coachable and enjoyable to work with during this phase, mentors must be cautious not to encourage mentees to clone themselves in the image of the mentor. Phase two involves cultivation and is often the most productive phase of the mentorship. During this period mentees demonstrate increasing competence and confidence. They begin to establish a personal professional identity - often assimilating their mentor’s example into their own personal style. During this phase, it is essential for the mentor to entrust the mentee with increasing responsibility and autonomy. In the third phase the mentoring relationship is characterized by leave-taking and distancing. This may be a difficult time emotionally as both parties must accept some loss and arrange to say goodbye to the intensive phase of the relationship. As the mentorship becomes, and appropriately so, less central in the life of the mentee, a mentor may experience loss, anger, or even insecurity at the mentee’s new competence. Excellent mentors work through these feelings, intentionally endorse the mentee’s status as a colleague, and reinforce the mentee’s sense of autonomy. Whatever the phase of the mentorship development or the rate of the mentee’s growth, the important thing is for the mentor to welcome change. It is helpful for the mentor to take the lead in occasionally discussing the status of the mentorship. Good mentors celebrate growth and change with their mentee even when change brings about loss. They understand that celebration is a memorable marker of transition.

**Accept Endings**

After the mentoring relationship comes to an appropriate end, the mentor and the mentee may continue a collegial friendship characterized by less frequent and informal contact. As the mentee achieves peer status with the mentor, they often feel gratitude and appreciation for the mentor’s guidance, while the mentor continues to support the mentee’s career and takes pride in the mentee’s accomplishments. This ideal outcome requires both the mentor and the mentee to work through any strong feeling associated with ending the working phase of the mentorship. Outstanding mentors help mentees articulate and work through feelings of sadness or anxiety associated with letting go. Simultaneously, they acknowledge and manage their own sadness, anger, or anxiety at the prospect of losing such an important and close professional connection. In the worst cases, both the mentor and the mentee may agree to avoid the subject of termination altogether, attempting to go on as if no change has occurred and as if the mentee will require the mentor’s intense intervention forever. Such agreements, of course, serve to stunt the mentee’s growth and ultimately reduce the value of the mentorship. Healthy mentors appreciate the seasons of a mentoring relationship. They anticipate and gracefully tolerate relationship transitions and take the lead in discussing these with their mentee’s. Healthy mentors accept endings when mentorships have run their course and facilitate closure when it is time for a mentee to move on and function independently. Excellent mentors help their mentees to appreciate the past but also welcome the future. They help mentees see that the end of the active phase of a mentorship signals success and that any other outcome would be cause for concern.

**Find Helpful Ways to Say Goodbye**

Preparing to say goodbye to a mentee is among the most often overlooked yet richly satisfying elements of successful mentoring. Quite often, only the most seasoned mentors carefully honor endings. Excellent mentors find creative methods for recognizing and honoring good collaboration, strong friendship, and important professional growth in a mentee. Saying goodbye requires self-awareness and the ability to both experience and articulate feelings about the mentee and about allowing the mentee to move on. One of the most effective methods of bringing closure to a mentorship is to schedule a formal time to process and celebrate the mentee’s moving on. A formal meeting offers the mentor an opportunity to say goodbye to the mentee through the medium of story-telling; the mentor offers a narrative of the mentorship including highlights of the mentee’s developmental milestones and things about the mentee that have most impressed the mentor. By weaving the history of the mentorship into a coherent narrative, the mentor allows the mentee to clearly reflect on their growth and accomplishments through the lens of the mentor. In many cases, a mentee will avoid formally saying goodbye to a mentor unless the mentor takes the lead, so the mentor can demonstrate a model of how to do this well. As mentor and mentee share reflections and express gratitude for one another, relationship closure occurs. Both parties are free to take leave, redefine the relationship, and move forward with new endeavors and perhaps different mentorships.

**Mentor as a Way of Life**

Authentic mentors never stop mentoring. Over the years, mentoring becomes a deeply engrained and consistently expressed facet of the mentor’s personality. Seldom will the master mentor’s inclinations toward helping lie dormant or untapped. Research indicates that excellent mentors manifest a general personality tendency or interest in caring for younger or less experienced individuals. This is often referred to as generative concern. Generative concern cannot be taught or trained. It either exists in the fundamental core of the mentor’s personality or it does not. Mentors who are generative and caring by nature are those who endure in the mentor role. Not surprisingly, being a successful generative mentor is strongly related to openness, emotional stability, and agreeableness. These mentors often help scores of mentees during their lifetime and many of their mentorships continue as strong collegial friendships for years afterwards. Mentoring becomes a way of life for outstanding mentors - both because they delight in seeing mentees succeed and because they reap rich internal rewards. Research on generative men and women show that they report greater levels of happiness and general life satisfaction. So automatic is the tendency to mentor in these generative souls that not mentoring is never a viable consideration. Although mentors choose mentees selectively and safeguard their own time and resources for mentees, it is difficult for the generative mentor not to mentor. Remember, however, that not everyone makes a good mentee. To successfully mentor across an entire career, a mentor must be willing to set limits and be selective.