



GUIDE

S.I.S.T.E.R.S. EDITION

Adapted from: Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing Student Mentor Program

Developing a Mentoring Perspective

Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

What a Mentor Is . . .

Mentor roles and responsibilities are varied and complex. Serving as a guide, facilitator, role model, and/or ally to the mentee, a mentor must be prepared to take on a range of roles and responsibilities that may change as the mentor/mentee relationship develops over time, as the needs and goals of the mentee shift, and as specific contexts and situations require different strategies. Although it's not possible to pigeonhole any mentor, mentee, or mentoring relationship, a mentor will generally enact a number of common roles and responsibilities. It's worth emphasizing that whatever role the mentor may take, the mentor's principal goal, as Paulo Freire reminds us, is to invite and nurture the "total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors."

A mentor is . . .

- **A knowledgeable and experienced guide who teaches** (and learns) through a commitment to the mutual growth of both mentee and mentor.
- **A caring, thoughtful, and humane facilitator** who provides access to people, places, experiences, and resources outside the mentee's routine environment.
- **A role model** who exemplifies in word and deed what it means to be an ethical, responsible, and compassionate human being.
- **A trusted ally, or advocate**, who works with (not for) the mentee and on behalf of the mentee's best interests and goals.

As a Peer Mentor, your principal objectives should be to...

Establish a positive, personal relationship with your mentee(s).

- Avoid acting as if you were nothing more than a professional service provider (“I’m here to do a job. I’m a tutor/peer advisor/student office worker; I’m not here to be your friend!” Make a proactive effort to act as a guide, a “coach,” and an ally and advocate.
- Once a positive, personal relationship is developed, it is much easier to realize the remaining three goals.
- Trust and respect must be established.
- Regular interaction and consistent support are important in many mentoring relationships.

Help your mentee(s) to develop academic and life skills.

- Work to accomplish specific goals (e.g., tutoring assistance on a homework assignment or peer advising about the best use of “free” time).
- When and where appropriate, emphasize life-management skills, such as decision-making, goal setting, time management, dealing with conflict, values clarification, and skills for coping with stress and fear.

Assist mentee(s) in accessing academic and university resources.

- Provide information — or better yet, help your mentee(s) find information — about academic resources (faculty, staff, academic support services, student organizations, etc.). Assist your mentee(s) in learning how to access and use these resources — don’t assume because they know where their professor’s office is that they also understand how to talk to their professor.

Enhance your mentee's ability to interact comfortably and productively with people/groups from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

- Your own willingness to interact with individuals and groups different from yourself will make a powerful statement about the value placed on diversity. Model the attitudes and behaviors you emphasize.
- Contrary to popular belief, we are not “all the same.” It is important to acknowledge and understand, not ignore, our differences. We need to learn how to use our differences as resources for growth. Respecting our differences is necessary but not sufficient; we need to know how to negotiate our differences in ways that produce new understandings and insights.
- Everyone holds particular preconceptions and stereotypes about one's own group and other groups. Take special care that you are not (intentionally or unintentionally) promoting your own views and values at the expense of your mentees' viewpoints. Work at understanding and critically examining your own perspectives on race, ethnicity, culture, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

[Adapted from Mentor Training Curriculum, National Mentoring Working Group convened by United Way of America and One to One, 1991, in One to One “Mentoring 101” Curriculum, The California Mentoring Partnership.]

You should strive to . . .

- Help your students achieve the potential within themselves that is hidden to others — and perhaps even to the students themselves.
- Share stories with students about your own educational career and the ways you overcame obstacles similar to theirs.
- Help students overcome their fear of a professor and help them to ask questions in a class or meet with the professor during office hours.
- Show a student how you learned time- management to do well in your classes.
- Mindfully listen to a student describe a personal problem and explore resources at the University to deal with the problem.
- Help a new student understand a particularly tough bureaucratic rule or procedure — and explain it in a way that the student is willing to come back to you to learn about other difficult regulations.
- Help a new student understand how to use resources at the university, such as the CAE Tutorial Lab or the Office of Counseling Services.
- Maintain confidentiality when a mentee shares personal thoughts and feelings (that are not life-threatening or could be a threat/harmful to themselves or others).

Barriers to Mindful Listening . . .

- ⊗ Viewing a topic as uninteresting.
- ⊗ Criticizing a speaker's appearance or their communication style (verbal cues, nonverbal cues, or both) rather than responding to their message.
- ⊗ Being self-absorbed (interjecting personal stories, thoughts, opinions) and 'talking down' to speaker.
- ⊗ When dealing with a difference of opinion: becoming "overstimulated" by something the speaker says, such that we begin thinking of our own rebuttals and fail to hear the rest of what the speaker has to say.
- ⊗ Listening only for facts; not taking the time to listen to the underlying message.
- ⊗ Tolerating, creating, or failing to adjust to distractions.
- ⊗ Faking attention.
- ⊗ Permitting personal prejudice or deep-seated convictions to impair comprehension.

Improving Listening Skills . . .

- ◆ Develop a desire (motivation) to listen, regardless of your level of interest in the subject matter.
- ◆ Increase your capacity to listen.
- ◆ Infer the speaker's intent or purpose: what is the speaker implying or suggesting about their goals or needs?
- ◆ Determine your own purpose in every listening situation.
- ◆ Become aware of your own biases and attitudes. What words or ideas or beliefs function as "shock" words to you?
- ◆ Analyze your listening habits (both productive and unproductive).
- ◆ Be mentally and physically prepared to listen.
- ◆ Delay judgments: hear the speaker out before you make judgments.
- ◆ Listen not only for facts, but for main ideas, principles, concepts, and patterns.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION GUIDELINES . . .

Disclaimer: These guidelines are not intended to substitute reporting to, and guidance from, Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Cook for situations that violate University Student Conduct Policies. Remember, "when in doubt, please reach out" to either Mrs. Brown (mbrown5@ncat.edu) or Mrs. Cook (lwcook@ncat.edu) for assistance. These Student Conduct Policies can be found in our Undergraduate Bulletin ([Click Here](#)).

As a Mentor, you may find yourself in a mediator role at times. Below are some steps you can follow to effectively resolve or minimize negative consequences of conflict before they escalate. This information is taken from the American Management Association. [Click Here](#) for the direct link.

Step 1: Define the source of conflict.

The more information you have about the cause of the problem, the more easily you can help resolve it. To get the information you need from those involved in the conflict, use a series of questions to identify the issue such as:

- *When did you feel upset?*
- *Do you see a relationship between that and this incident?*
- *How did this incident begin?*

As a mentor, you should give both parties a chance to share their side of their story. It will give you an understanding of the situation, as well as demonstrate your impartiality.

Step 2: Look Beyond the incident.

Often, it is not the situation but the point of view of the situation that causes anger to fester and ultimately leads to a shouting match or other visible and disruptive result.

The source of the conflict might be a minor issue that occurred months before, but the level of stress has grown to the point where the two parties have begun attacking each other personally instead of addressing the real problem. Your goal is to get them to look beyond the triggering incident to see the real cause. Once again, probing questions will help, such as:

- *What do you think happened here?*
- *When do you think the problem between you first arose?*

Step 3: Request solutions.

After getting each party's viewpoint, the next step is to get them to identify how the situation could be changed. Again, question the parties to solicit their ideas:

- *How can you make things better between you?*

As mediator, you have to be an active listener, aware of every verbal nuance, as well as a good reader of body language. You want to get the disputants to start cooperating, and that means steering the discussion away from finger pointing and toward ways of resolving the conflict.

Step 4: Identify solutions both disputants can support.

You are listening for the most acceptable course of action. Point out the merits of various ideas, not only from each other's perspective, but in terms of the benefits to the organization. For instance, you might suggest the need for greater cooperation and collaboration to effectively represent the SISTERS program and carry out its goals and missions. Discuss how their inability to work together can impact community service projects, the overall comradery of the group as a whole, and their professionalism.

Step 5: Agreement.

The mediator needs to get the two parties to agree and accept one of the alternatives identified in Step 4. The goal is to reach a negotiated agreement. However, it might be sufficient to meet with the individuals and have them answer these questions:

- What action plans will you both put in place to prevent conflicts from arising in the future?
- What will you do if problems arise in the future?

CONFIDENTIALITY REQUIREMENTS . . .

- Maintain confidentiality of mentees, unless life-threatening information is shared that can be harmful to self or others or if the student is in violation of Student Conduct policies as outlined in the Undergraduate Bulletin 2020-2021.
- Mentors are not to call SISTERS group meetings prior to discussing with Mrs. Brown or Mrs. Cook.
- Mentors should not discuss mentees or confidential information shared by mentees in group settings.
- Mentors should not engage in social media conflict or disclose personal, confidential information pertaining to their mentees in a way that is directly or indirectly connected to the mentee or any member of the SISTERS program.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES . . .

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Peer Mentoring Resources
<http://www.uwm.edu/lets-ci/edison/pmlinks.html>

Mentoring Peer Resources
<http://www.mentors.ca/mentor.html>

San Jose State University Peer Mentor Program
<http://www.sjsu.edu/muse/peermentor.htm>

Mid Michigan Community College Peer Mentors
http://www.midmich.cc.mi.us/Peer_Mentor/default.htm

University of Michigan Peer Mentors
<http://www.onsp.umich.edu/mentorship/peern.html>

University of Tennessee, Memphis Peer Mentoring
<http://www.utmem.edu/transplant/peermentoring.html>

Articles from "The Mentoring Connection"
<http://www.wmich.edu/conferences/mentoring/>

The Mentoring Group
<http://www.mentoringgroup.com/home.html>

Formal mentor programs
<http://www.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/mentor.html>

Mentoring categories
<http://www.teachermentors.com/MCenter%20Site/MCategoryList.html>

Mentoring resources and links
<http://www.mentors.net/Links.html>

National Mentoring Partnership
<http://www.mentoring.org>