

## MENTOR AND BE MENTORED

*“Successful people turn everyone who can help them into sometimes mentors!”—John Crosby*

As much as we may want a steadfast set of directions to reach the top in our careers, make our first million dollars, or lead a fulfilling life, there is no one way that works for everyone. Life does, however, give us guides in the form of mentors; people whose behavior, success, attitude, or career you wish to emulate. Mentors can assist you in determining your goals, meeting the right people, working through your roadblocks, and celebrating with you when you reach your milestones.

Throughout your life, you will find people who will be informal mentors. You will learn from and confide in them. You may not even realize that they are mentors until long after they have impacted your life or career. You may also be assigned a mentor through your company or organization. There is no limit to the number of mentors you can have, formal or informal. Reach out to the people who are living the kind of life that you would like to lead, and take advantage of opportunities to bring positive, interesting, motivational people into your life.

**Finding and interacting with a mentor can be a bit awkward. Asking for help may not come easily, so here are some steps for starting a mentoring relationship:**

1. Ask a close friend or a co-worker about themselves, who they look up to, or how they got to where they are in business. By asking questions of someone you feel comfortable with, you will learn how to ask the same of a mentor. And in the process, you may find valuable insight from someone you already know.
2. After learning about several of your close friends and coworkers, tell them you would like to meet with someone they admire, or consider a mentor. It can be a very casual meeting with the three of you. Ask the same kinds of questions of their mentor that you asked them, and remember to offer some of your own story, and why you are interested in them.
3. Practice makes perfect, so continue to learn more about the people you have known well and for a long time, stay in touch with their mentors, and begin to look for other people that you admire, and whose lives you would like to emulate.
4. Once you have identified a person or two whom you would like to consider your mentor, send them a note or an email requesting a meeting. Remember that they may be busy and may not respond to your request. This doesn't make them not worth learning from, but it may take them out of the good-mentor category.
5. When you identify a good mentor, and they have agreed to have an initial meeting with you, keep the meeting focused, ask prepared questions, and listen intently. If you find the meeting valuable, ask if your new mentor would mind if you kept in touch. If they say yes, remember the importance of follow-up.

One of the most rewarding things that you can do is to be a mentor yourself. Do this by leading by example, living an exemplary life, and striving to do better. Volunteer to be a mentor, or recognize when a friend, contact, or colleague can benefit from your experience, advice and perspective. The best way to be a good mentor is to listen, take your time, and help others come to their own conclusions, assisting without doing the job for them.

You may tend to reject the idea of mentorship on the outset. It isn't easy to ask for help, or request that someone take you under their wing. It may be even more difficult to commit to doing the same for another person. However, mentors can help you with introductions and gaining confidence in speaking to new people. And as a mentor you can learn from someone new, with a fresh perspective, as well as teach, listen, coach, and be a guide as someone else's success becomes yours as well.

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