

How Women Mentors Can Build Powerful Mentoring Relationships

Mentorships are collaborative partnerships that serve the purpose to help your mentee, grow personally and professionally, learn new skills and become successful in their future career.

The best mentors are transparent, authentic, compassionate, patient, and engage in effective contrastive communication.

Here are some tips on building a successful partnership with your mentee:

Approachability, availability, and effective listening

Your mentee should feel comfortable approaching you for advice; however, knowing your availability and the best way to communicate with you is the beginning of a successful relationship. Set a day and time for your monthly regular sessions. Decide together if sessions should be an hour or two a month or broken into 30-minute sessions a few times a month.

It is also important to be prepared and make the most of the time you have with your mentee. Once a schedule is in place and ways of communication are established, keep your commitments and be ready to openly listen and learn, use guided questions, and provide support. If a session needs to be rescheduled, be sure to immediately notify your mentee and have them do the same.

Agree on expectations and goals

When you and your mentee agree ahead of time on what you both expect of each other, what you want to talk about, and what you want to focus on can make your role much easier. Remember, you can also use the S.M.A.R.T Goals template to set up goals and help keep you both on track.

Be committed and invested

One of the most important elements for a successful mentorship is a commitment on part of both the mentor and mentee. To be involved in a mentoring relationship is a privilege for both participants, and as a result, it is important to be gracious and thoughtful towards each other. Mentoring takes time and energy from both, therefore, each should be dedicated to doing their part and helping to build a strong relationship.

Give Productive and Honest Feedback

Mentees will be looking for personal and professional practical advice and feedback that they can apply immediately. Give them the opportunity to share their preferred communication style and gauge how willing are they to hear direct, and constructive feedback.

Considering these tips when providing effective feedback:

- **Bond with your mentee:** Developing trust and having mutual respect can create an amicable environment for offering insight. Be mindful of their preferences when sharing personal information, but also try to show interest in their life and background.
- **Be specific:** Facts and descriptions can be more helpful than general statements about a situation. Try providing two or more examples to clarify important points that you're trying to make. Use storytelling to drive your point even more and add context to what you are trying to get across.
- **Keep it simple:** Choosing a few important topics to discuss can give you the time to address each one fully.
- **Use first-person language:** By discussing your feelings from your perspective and using "I" statements, you can keep the discussion focused on how you feel and not on other perspectives.
- **Keep track of progress:** When having multiple sessions, make sure to address your previous feedback to see how your mentee responded/followed up and if there are any adjustments either person would like to make.
- **Be adaptable:** Some situations might need your prompt attention, so being flexible would be a great benefit to your mentee. In those circumstances, you can reach out to your mentee to see if they are available to talk sooner rather than later.

Remember, with any great relationship...building mutual trust and respect may take a little time, by you modeling positive behavior and offering guidance toward reaching a specific goal/s should be the compass that guides all your actions as a mentor.

Mentoring is one lever we can activate to advance more women in the workforce, to help them gain access to capital and economic opportunities they might otherwise miss, and to be better prepared for opportunities when they come.

Being a mentor can result in lifelong relationships that continue to nurture and empower mentees for a lifetime and maybe one day, they too will pay it forward.