

What does Mentorship target?

Guidance and Advice:

Through the duration of working with a mentor, a mentee will get the chance to observe and ask questions about things related to the field of work and the way you operate in the field. Since the mentor is chosen because they have experience, this becomes a very first hand and valuable way for the mentee to develop without much risk through their learning mistakes.

With regards to these mistakes in particular, this is the best way to develop and is also the reason why it is encouraged to ask questions in a mentorship or in a class or in anything. Fixing and addressing mistakes and questions is how we grow and develop. This is one of the most valuable parts of a mentorship because it takes out the risk and consequence of making mistakes while in the field. You

get to make them while with a mentor, allowing for more room for these learning errors and then to grow from them.

Support and Encouragement:

Mentors can offer support and encouragement for young scholars and workers to make those mistakes and to help them adjust to the transition into their field of study and work. It is important in its own regard to build this support system because it builds the confidence and resilience of the mentee.

This gives them the chance to go into the field confident in their own abilities, mentally prepared to now take on their work first hand.

Networking:

In many fields, one of the most effective ways to find opportunities and jobs when looking for them is by having a networking system. Knowing someone, someone knowing you, this will open the doors for when you're looking for that opportunity or job. Not only getting a job, but also getting to collaborate with others in the field, maybe getting opportunities already in your job to work on a bigger project and develop your standing in the field, all of these come with knowing people in the field, and having mentors and peers you know in the field is a great way to do just that.²

² MichaelPageUK. (2024, February 13). *Top 12 benefits of networking: Why networking is important*. Michael Page. <https://www.michaelpage.com.au/advice/career-advice/career-progression/top-12-benefits-networking-why-networking-important>

Goal Setting and Accountability:

For young scholars and workers going into a field, often this comes with a heightened sense of pessimism or optimism, depending on the person. But a mentor offers a chance to balance out these expectations for yourself and set more realistic and attainable goals. Not only this, but staying connected with a mentor for long enough allows them to hold you accountable for these goals and help you achieve them, step by step.

How does this Mentorship go both ways?

Mentorship can offer so much to the mentee and the relationship is geared towards doing that, but the mentor also gets some value for themselves as well. How so?

Personal Satisfaction:

Most mentors love their profession, love their field of study. They've worked years and years in schooling and in their career to get them to the position they're in now. Being able to see the youth want to learn and want to be part of a profession that they love and are passionate about, to many this satisfaction of being able to share their love for something is a really special thing.



Enhancing Skills:

While mentors have had varying levels of experience in their field, many having been in the field many years to then be considered for mentorship, there is always room for improvement. Becoming a mentor allows those individuals to hone in their skills regarding leadership, communication, and coaching.

Fresh Perspectives:

Building off of the section of enhancing skills, taking on a mentee offers new perspectives for the mentor about their field of work. This is valuable regardless of how many years the mentor has worked in the field. In fact, the more years that this mentor might have worked in this field, the more they could use a young, up and coming mentee to offer ideas or perspectives. All fields change over time and getting new perspectives of a young mind offers lots of development for the mentor, even while we often focus on how mentorships develop the mentee.

Legacy Building:

When combining all of the previous points, you get a sense that a mentorship is the passing on of knowledge, skills, and thoughts down to the next generation of workers and thinkers. That's exactly the point! A mentorship is meant to create a bond between a mentor and mentee that creates a sense of legacy from one generation to another.

This legacy builds on a line of networking as previously discussed, but also contributes to the whole field in general. By developing the next line of leaders in their field, they get to see the field they dedicated their lives to move into the hands of youths they got to train and bring up into the same passion they have.

How to find Mentorship

Determine your Goals and Needs:

To find mentorship, it's important to know what you're looking for. Mentors are interested in mentees who are focused, dedicated, and interested in their field. They want hard workers who also have a sense that they know what they want. Before you go out to find mentorship, it is important that you have some idea of what specialties you want, what focuses you want, and what you want out of a mentor. Not only that, but communicating that with a mentor is important to stay on the same page about goals and needs.



Manage your current network:

It could be helpful to create a list of inventory, that being a list of your possible connections in the field. This could be a former or current professor, a friend, a colleague or former colleague, teaching assistants, maybe even a family friend. Getting a sense of your connections is helpful for assessing where mentorships could come from. If you fear or worry that your network isn't as big as you might want or you don't have connections like you'd want, there are ways to grow that too. As college students, you can go to office hours of professors you'd like to get a connection with or take a class of a professor that has good reviews or about a topic you want to go into.

Attend events:

If you look around for them, colleges and communities often hold mixer events to meet people in a field you want to go into. These are great events that are geared towards building a good network and meeting like-minded people. These events are frequently hosted or attended by people in the field already, possibly looking for mentees to work with.³



Online platforms:

In a digital world, it has become very typical to turn to social media and online platforms to build connections. LinkedIn is the most popular platform for business connections, however there are other platforms for the same purpose. These platforms are great for convenient connections and being able to meet people in your field wanting to collaborate. It's like a business dating app, aimed at building relationships between people in the same field.

Reach out:

One of the hardest things about obtaining a mentorship is getting yourself out of your comfort zone and meeting people, talking to people, taking that step to put yourself out there. Especially for people who aren't as extroverted or used to being social and reaching out to others. But just taking that deep breath and putting yourself out of your box and reaching out is the only way to achieve this. It can be scary but you give yourself a great chance to make something of your career early if you can take this most important step earlier.

How to Approach a Mentor

There are many things to do and many ways to find mentors. But it is important to know how to talk to mentors and how to approach them. Knowing how to talk to and approach a mentor is important to gaining mentorship so they can get to know what kind of a mentee you'll be right from the start.

Be Respectful and Considerate:

³ *What really happens at Mixers?*. What Really Happens at Mixers? | Ivy Exec. (n.d.). <https://ivyexec.com/career-advice/2020/what-really-happens-at-mixers/>

It is important to understand that if a mentor is offering themselves to lead a mentorship, that they are giving up their time and effort to teach you very valuable things to push you through your career. Not only that, but they have likely been in the field a long time and have built a great career already. Be

polite, respectful, and considerate of their time, availability, and accomplishments.

Prepare questions or topics:

It can be helpful to have something to contribute to a conversation with a mentor you would like to work with. Having questions prepared for this person also helps you appear confident and more put together. On top of all that, it shows that you're serious about the mentorship and that you have interest in the field



and this is a huge green flag for mentors looking for mentees to work with.

Be open and honest:

Communicating clearly with a mentor you would like to work with is important to also be respectful to them about their time and availability. Being open and honest and getting to the point quickly also shows the mentor that you are serious about working with them. This also brings us back to how important it is to communicate your goals and needs in what a mentorship would look like in your eyes.

Effect on YOUR career

Mentorships offer so much to both the mentee and the mentor. To your career as the mentee, it can be such a life changing experience to develop this connection with an advisor. Taking that step outside of your comfort zone is the first place to start. After you have that confidence in stepping out of your comfort zone, it becomes much much easier to take the rest of these steps. Keeping these things in mind will open up doors for your young and promising career to find guidance and opportunities, as well as developing you into an effective and impactful member of your field of expertise. Maybe one day you'll get the chance to mentor some new young students of your own.

Further Resource Links:

Sciences, N. A. of, Engineering, & and Medicine; Policy and Global Affairs; Board on Higher Education and Workforce; Committee on Effective Mentoring in STEMM. (2019, October 30). *The Science of Mentoring Relationships: What is mentorship?*. The Science of Effective Mentorship in STEMM.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK552775/#:~:text=Mentor%20encourages%20mentees%2C%20helps%20with,and%20uses%20active%2Dlistening%20techniques.&text=Mentor%20serves%20as%20a%20guide,deep%2Dlevel%20similarity%20with%20them.&text=Allows%20mentees%20to%20see%20themselves%20as%20future%20academics>.

Mentoring programs: Purpose, benefits + how to get started: Together mentoring software. RSS. (n.d.).

<https://www.togetherplatform.com/blog/what-is-the-purpose-of-mentoring>

American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Introduction to mentoring: A guide for mentors and*

mentees. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/education-career/grad/mentoring>