Tips for Mentees

• Prior to meeting with your mentor, write down at what you hope to achieve in the meeting. Also write down anything that concerns you most about meeting with your mentor.

• It is likely that you selected your mentor because of the mentor's resources. This typically means that your mentor has both considerable gifts and a tight time schedule. Dealing with time is a key aspect of the success of mentoring. Make sure you are clear about your needs.

• Forming a mentoring agreement and action plan spells out the purpose of the mentoring and may even include a list of career goals and work activities expected to achieve those goals and how you will work together to achieve the goals. If you do not have a formal agreement, learn about your mentor’s perspective about such agreements and discuss what ought to be included, if such an agreement is valued.

• Be prepared to do some homework in order to demonstrate initiative, leadership and self-reliance. Explore alternative options for asking questions or gaining information other than just relying on your mentor. On the other hand, keep your mentor in the picture by letting the mentor know why you are asking a particular question after having explored other options.

• The focus of most successful mentoring is mutual learning. Feel free to explore what you have to offer the mentor. A sense of humour and a sense of enjoyment of your time together are essential as well.
Tips for Mentors

Make a list
Preparing for your first meeting: make a list of things that you would have wanted to know when you were in the position of the person who you will be meeting with. The list might include information about yourself (as the mentor) about the organization or position, about what it was like to be starting out, about what it was like in a new organization, or about expectations concerning the relationship. Write these details down in note form and then send them to the person you will be mentoring.

Take the initiative
Take the initiative to make the first call. Hold the meeting time as essential. Don’t shift it around to accommodate a busy schedule. An emergency should be the only reason to cancel the date.

Be clear about purpose and boundaries
Be clear about ground rules and what is in bounds or out of bounds in your mentoring relationship; for example, becoming involved in dispute resolution. The mentorship relationship agreement is a tool that will guide you to address purpose and boundaries of your relationship.

Create an agenda
Ask the other person if it is okay to identify two or three items for the initial agenda and then ask the other person if they have any items they would like to add. You can use the mentoring relationship agreement as a guide for creating that agenda. For your first meeting, you may include items like getting to know each other, why the mentee chose you as a mentor, questions you have for the mentee, logistics, goals and expectations.

Listen deeply and ask powerful questions
The two skills that are essential for successful mentoring are (1) in-depth listening, that is, suspending judgment, listening for understanding and providing an accepting and supportive atmosphere; and (2) asking powerful questions, that is, questions that are challenging in a friendly way and questions that help the other person talk about what is important to that person. Refrain from asking "why" questions. Use open ended questions that start with "how" or "what." Refer to the Sample Questions for Mentors provided in the tool kit for some ideas.
Plan for the next meeting
At the end of the meeting, review the mutually developed agenda to determine progress. Then solicit any ideas about what you might want to discuss at your next meeting. Ask for impressions or feedback about how the meeting went – what you might continue doing, or stop doing to make the next meeting as good or better.

Experiment with process
Don’t be afraid to try different strategies in the mentoring process such as role plays, simulations, role rehearsals, experiential learning activities, brainstorming, mind-mapping and other techniques that you feel comfortable with. This could include going for a walk together; sitting on a bench sharing lunch, or in some cases, attending a special event all have meaning for relationship building.

Focus on wisdom
The mentor is a resource, catalyst, facilitator, idea generator, networker, and problem-solver rather than the person with answers. The role of the mentor is not about "telling" another person what to do or how to do it. Freely share what you have done (or have learned), not as a prescription, but more as an example of something from which you gained some wisdom. Contributing ideas or suggestions, not as a sage, but as a collaborator. It is not necessary to be an expert.

Maintain and respect privacy, honesty, and integrity
Failing to adhere to these values can have disastrous consequences on the mentoring relationship. Do the best you can to ensure that "what is said in this room stays in this room."

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