

How to Be an Effective Mentor: 33 Tips for Beginners

Relationally . . .

1. Create a climate of trust that allows the mentee to share honestly and reflect openly upon personal experiences.
2. Be a responsive listener by showing sincere interest in what the mentee has to say.
3. Where appropriate ask open-ended questions related to immediate concerns and actual situations with which the mentee is presently dealing.
4. Provide descriptive rather than evaluative feedback whenever possible, based on your observations rather than inferences about motives.
5. Offer nonjudgmental sensitive responses that help to clarify emotional states and reactions of the mentee to personal life dilemmas and problems.

Informationally . . .

6. Where appropriate, request information and offer specific suggestions to the mentee about his or her current personal, educational and career goals and plans, and progress toward achieving them.
7. Review relevant background information and seek to develop an informed personal profile of the mentee.
8. Ask probing questions aimed at assuring factual understanding of the mentee's present educational and career situation.
9. Make restatements to ensure factual accuracy and interpretive understanding.
10. Make sure the mentee is relying on facts as an integral component of the decision-making process.

Facilitatively . . .

11. Assist mentees in considering alternative views and options while reaching their own decisions about attainable personal, academic, and career objectives.
12. Pose hypothetical questions to expand the mentee's views.
13. Explore the underlying experiential and informational basis for assumptions.
14. Present multiple viewpoints to generate a more in-depth analysis of decisions and options.
15. Analyze reasons for current pursuits and the level of commitment to goals.

Confrontationally . . .

16. Where necessary, help the mentees to gain insight into unproductive personal strategies and behaviors and help them to evaluate their need and capacity to change.
17. Use probing questions to assess the readiness of the mentee to benefit from new ways of looking at things.
18. Acknowledge openly any concerns you may have about possible negative consequences of constructive (confrontational) feedback on the mentor-mentee relationship.
19. Focus on the most likely strategies and behaviors for meaningful (productive) change.
20. Offer comments and encouragement that emphasize the mentee's positive potential for growth beyond the current situation.

As a Role Model . . .

21. Share personal life experiences and feelings as a role model in order to personalize and enrich the relationship.
22. Offer personal thoughts and anecdotes that illustrate the value of learning from unsuccessful or difficult experiences (i.e., to show that trial and error and self-correction can be meaningful learning experiences and do not have to be viewed as growth-limiting “failures”).
23. Provide direct, realistic assessments of your positive belief in the mentee’s ability to pursue attainable goals.
24. Express a confident, positive outlook toward appropriate risk taking as necessary for personal, educational, training, and career development.
25. Make statements that clearly encourage personal mentee actions to attain concrete objectives toward stated goals.

In Terms of Vision . . .

26. Encourage the mentee to envision his or her own future personally and professionally.
27. Make statements that require reflection on present and future educational, training, and career attainments.
28. Ask questions that aim to clarify the mentee’s positive and negative perceptions about personal ability to manage change successfully.
29. Encourage ongoing reassessment of mentee’s individual choices, options, and resources.
30. Express confidence in the mentee’s carefully thought-out decisions.
31. Offer remarks that show respect for the mentee’s capacity to determine his or her own future.
32. Make comments directed at analyzing problem-solving and decision-making strategies.
33. Encourage the mentee to develop his or her talents and pursue personal dreams.