



The Do's and Don'ts of **BEING A MENTOR**

WORST PRACTICES: THE DON'TS

✘ Mentor a direct report

Bosses are expected to mentor and coach their faculty and trainees; however, we all need someone we can go to if our problem is with our leadership.

✘ Say "here's what I would do"

Allow mentees to find their own solutions to problems. Your role is to help them weigh their options and potential impacts, not to make decisions for them. Rather than giving ideas on how you would do something, ask your mentee how they think they should approach it.

✘ Be the "me" in mentoring

Mentoring is about the mentee. Humility on your part is crucial to building a trusting relationship. Hubris, or even pretending to know more than you do, often stands in the way of helping mentees with important issues. Also, do not be offended if the mentee does not follow your advice.

✘ Continue to mentor if it's not working

Solicit feedback from your mentee and address any problems quickly. However, if things go awry, you do not have to continue mentoring them. Just be sure to celebrate what was worked on and agree to close the relationship amicably.

BEST PRACTICES: THE DO'S

✔ Be a trustworthy confidant

Your mentee needs to know you are a safe harbor for venting. Make it clear that conversations will not be shared with others. Be enthusiastic during meetings, and respond with compassion.

✔ Put context around your feedback

Instead of saying "good job," offer specific examples such as, "You clearly articulated your point when you said ..." The same is true for providing negative feedback. Additionally, avoid saying "never" or "always" because they tend to make people defensive.

✔ Create—and stick to—a defined structure

Sign an agreement that clearly defines how often and where you will meet. Ensure you are accessible to your mentee and include guidelines for drop-in or impromptu sessions. Also, establish expectations regarding roles and outcomes.

✔ Act in their best interest

Protect your mentee from onerous departmental tasks and burdensome committees by speaking up with leadership. Additionally, introduce your mentee to opportunities that will expand their academic career locally and nationally.

Additional Resources

Li, S., Malin, J.R., Hackman, D.G. (2018). Mentoring supports and mentoring across difference: Insights from mentees. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 26, 563-584.

Cho, C.S., Ramanan, R.A., Feldman, M.D. (2011). Defining the ideal qualities of mentorship: A qualitative analysis of the characteristics of outstanding mentors. *American Journal of Medicine*, 124, 453-458.

Chopra, V., Arora, V.M., Saint, S. (2018). Will you be my mentor? Four archetypes to help mentees succeed in academic medicine. *JAMA Int Med*, 178, 175-176.



Visit unmc.edu/mentoring for more information

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