



## Things to Ponder

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## Mentoring Relationships

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*By Judi Moreo*

Mentors are people who have more experience than we have and are willing to help and guide us in our development. In many cases, mentors can open doors and introduce us to people we may want or need to know. They usually have nothing to gain by helping us other than their own personal satisfaction.

Most often, we acquire our mentor through work. It may be a boss or a respected executive within the organization. Mentoring relationships are usually built over time. The best mentors are generally those who have taken an interest in our development long before we were aware of it. They have been gently nudging us toward changes in our behavior, our appearance and our work habits. Having seen that we are willing to make the changes they feel would be beneficial to both the company and ourselves, they become more willing to invest their time in imparting their wisdom to us.

When we approach someone we admire and ask them to become our mentor, it is important to let the person know why we have asked them and not someone else. We must let them know what we hope to learn and discuss how much of a time commitment it might take on their part. They will also want to know what we can contribute to the relationship. Not everyone has the desire to be a mentor, so be prepared if they turn you down. It may feel like rejection.

There are a number of factors that comprise a good mentoring relationship. Open, honest and clear communication is imperative. From the beginning, there must be specific guidelines and boundaries, both for the mentor and the mentee. Determine how often you will meet, what subjects, if any, are out of bounds and set goals for the desired results. All assignments must be completed in a timely manner. Continued communication with regard to progress and establishing new goals will help to maintain the relationship.

A good mentor/mentee partnership can result in a bond and friendship that will last for many years. The greatest compliment to your mentor is to become a mentor to someone else as soon as you are able. While you continue to learn and grow with your own mentor's help, you can also pass on the wisdom you have gained.

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