

# Attributes of a Good Mentor

from Arizona State University

**Confidence, like art, never comes from having all the answers; it comes from being open to all the questions.**

~ *Earl Gray Stevens*

## Patience

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As noted elsewhere, a mentor wears many hats—sometimes a teacher, sometimes a role model, sometimes a friend. Patience is required to gauge the protégé's needs and to respond by fulfilling the appropriate role. Giving direct advice might be easier, but far less effective, in many occasions than modeling an appropriate strategy/behavior or offering the support provided by active listening.

## Support

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Acknowledging difficulties and recognizing efforts/accomplishments can help the protégé feel that they are not "all alone."

## Honesty

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Frank feedback about skills and performance are crucial to a protégé's development and is unlikely to be available in other domains. Honest and open discussions about the mentor's and protégé's needs help ensure that the relationship remains productive and that both parties remain satisfied with their roles.

## Availability

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The amount of time required of the mentor depends upon the nature of the mentoring relationship (see mentoring forms above) and the protégés' needs. Initial and ongoing discussions of expectations between mentor and protégé can help ensure that the mentor's availability meets the protégé's needs. If the protégé's needs exceed the mentor's availability, then these open discussions provide an appropriate forum for exploring alternate mentoring resources or arrangements.

## Communication Skills

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The mentoring relationship provides a valuable opportunity for the mentor to hone their own communication skills, while also helping to develop these skills in their protégé. The multiple roles of the mentor require different communication approaches and flexibility in their application. The array of modern communication media available (e.g., face-to-face conversation, phone, videoconference, e-mail, instant messenger) present both challenges and opportunities for the relationship's success and for the mentor's skills development.

## Networking Skills

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A successful mentor provides access to resources outside of their limited purview. Providing access to one's personal network of colleagues links the protégé to a carefully developed web of resources. Actively demonstrating one's networking skills models one of the skills that is most important for success in academia.

**Advice is like snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind.**

~ *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

# Benefits of Mentoring

from Arizona State University

## For The Protégé

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- Constructive criticism and informal feedback facilitates development of increased competencies and stronger interpersonal skills.
- Enhances confidence and offers challenges to set higher goals, take risks and achieve at higher levels.
- Knowledge of formal and informal rules and expectations for advancement.
- Knowledge of university procedures.
- Advice on scholarship and teaching.
- Individual recognition and encouragement.
- Psychosocial support.
- Advice on balancing range of academic, professional and administrative responsibilities.

## For The Mentor

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- Development of interpersonal and communication skills.
- Fosters leadership and teaching skills.
- Satisfaction in assisting in colleague development.
- Demonstrates professionalism and commitment.
- Development of a network of colleagues.

## For Departments/Institutions

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- More positive organizational climate and clearer understanding of professional responsibilities and expectations.
- Reduced attrition rates.
- Promotes culture of cooperation and cohesion.
- Increased productivity and satisfaction of protégé.
- Research atmospheres in which mentoring is present are less likely to have scientific misconduct.
- Important tool for building diversity.

**We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.**

*~ Winston Churchill*