

FACULTY TIPSHEET

How to be a Successful Mentor

There are various types of mentoring relationships. As students, we were mentored by our faculty advisors. As faculty, we now mentor students, junior peers, and even those who are in equal rank. Being a mentor is a great responsibility. It can take a lot of time and effort on your part to do it well. Here are some tips and guidelines to help you, the faculty mentor, create a successful mentoring relationship.

- 1. Communicate and listen.** Sometimes the best thing a faculty mentor can do is just listen. Focus more on what they are communicating to you and less on your response to them. Practice [active listening](#). As you listen, understand your mentee's point of view and grasp any of the outside influences that might make themselves known through your mentee's words. Don't inject too much of your own desires or opinions into their plan.
- 2. Give honest feedback.** Although you want to be kind, you shouldn't filter your feedback to avoid hurting your mentee's feelings. Sharing your own experience is a great way to send a message without criticizing them directly. If the mentee is savvy, they will see the comparison.
- 3. Be aware of intersectionality.** Effective mentors need to be aware of their own biases. Particularly when mentoring relationships cross lines of difference (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, class, race), mentors should discuss bias with the mentee and together make a plan to mitigate the effect of bias in the mentoring relationship. If you need assistance, ask the Office of Diversity and Inclusion for resources and support.
- 4. Let your mentee make decisions.** Recognize that your mentee's goals are their own and that they may have career goals that differ from the path you chose. Let them be in control.
- 5. Ask questions.** Effective mentors develop a storehouse of probing questions on any number of subjects. Your questions probe for clarity and meaning. Help your mentee find patterns. You never want your mentee to become dependent on you; you want them to be able to eventually outgrow their need for you.
 - How are you doing, outside of work?
 - What keeps you up at night?
 - Do you see yourself being happy on your current five-year career plan?
 - What do you do to "reboot" to keep yourself from burning out?
 - Who has been most influential in your life?

RESOURCES

- Verywell Mind: "How to Practice Active Listening" [go.unl.edu/activelisting](https://www.verywellmind.com/active-listening-2796287)
- Business News Daily: "5 Ways to Become a Better Mentor" [go.unl.edu/howtomentor](https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5-ways-to-become-a-better-mentor-1111111.html)
- Association for Talent Development: "7 Tips About How to Mentor Someone" [go.unl.edu/7mentortips](https://www.ata-d.com/7-ways-to-mentor-someone/)
- Forbes: "If You Want To Be A Great Mentor Do These 5 Things" [go.unl.edu/5thingsmentorsdo](https://www.forbes.com/advice/biz/5-ways-to-become-a-great-mentor/)
- Harvard Business Review: "Great Mentors Focus on the Whole Person, Not Just Their Career" [go.unl.edu/greatmentors](https://hbr.org/2016/07/great-mentors-focus-on-the-whole-person-not-just-their-career/)