

Excerpts from....

Quintessential Careers: The Value of a Mentor

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Talk with your mentor about mutual expectations for the mentoring relationship how it will work, what it will look like, and how often you'll communicate. You and your mentor may want to agree at the outset that either of you can end the relationship at any time with no hard feelings. Also be sure not to overburden your mentor by demanding too much time and attention or becoming overly dependent on your mentor. Some experts suggest monthly meetings supplemented by regular e-mail and phone contact. Your meetings can be in the workplace, over a meal, at the gym, or anyplace that's conducive to a productive exchange of ideas. Set boundaries relating to confidentiality, time commitments, and the areas you mutually feel the mentor can most help you with.

The mentor may tend to give a lot more than you do to the relationship, so be sure to express regularly that you value and appreciate your mentor's guidance. The feeling of being needed and making a difference in a protégé's life will often be a rewarding payoff for the mentor, but don't be afraid to supplement that reward with a token gift, flowers, or by picking up the check when you share a meal. You could also send a note to the mentor's supervisor praising his or her contribution to your professional growth.

You'll know if the mentoring relationship is working if your mentor encourages your goals, provides honest and constructive feedback, helps you develop self-awareness, challenges you to grow beyond your perceived limitations, introduces you to movers and shakers, motivates you to join professional organizations that can help you advance, and above all, listens to you and is easy to communicate with.

What do mentors do?

Your mentor can help you assess your strengths and weaknesses, as well as help you develop skills for success and a long-range career plan. If you and your mentor share the same employer, your mentor can foster your sense of belonging within the organization, help you navigate the company culture and politics, as well as let you know who the organization's key players are. You can also work through career and workplace problems with your mentor's assistance. A mentor can provide a fresh perspective -- a new way of looking at a problem or issue. You can bounce ideas off your mentor. Look for a relationship in which the mentor is more coach than adviser -- one in which the mentor facilitates your decision-making process by suggesting alternatives rather than telling you what to do. Ideally, your mentor will motivate you to do your best work.

http://www.quintcareers.com/mentor_value.html