

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTOR

Once you meet your mentor, work on building trust between the two of you. As you know, genuine trust takes time, but you can take several steps to enhance the process. Here are a few:

Steps for Building Trust

Show your commitment to your mentor: Show up for every meeting, be on time, talk about how this is a priority for you, do a little extra now and then, and speak well of him/her in front of others.

Reveal personal information including mistakes you've made: Rather than appearing "perfect," describe some errors you've made and how they made you feel and grow.

Remember what this person said to you before: Refer back to other conversations. ("By the way, how did your aunt's operation turn out?" "You mentioned xyz last month. I've been thinking about that and...")

Do what you promise to do: Follow through. Bring the book, make the call, show up at the event, etc.

Give honest feedback: Gain permission from your partner to do this. Be direct yet kind in the process. You may be the only person willing to do this in your mentoring partner's life.

Be clear on what you do and don't want communicated to others: When in doubt, double check about whether something is confidential. (*You're moving to Denver. Is that something you do or don't want others to know?*)

Deepen Your Conversations

Once you've established strong trust, take another look at the *Conversation Starters*. Try some of the probes designed to have deeper discussions. Share some of your personal situations and feelings. Always respect your mentor's limits on sharing such information.

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MENTOR, CONTINUED

Showing Appreciation to Your Mentor

Mentors seldom ask for signs of appreciation—or even consciously expect them. Yet nearly all enjoy and react well to genuine appreciation demonstrated by their partners.

The key is that your appreciation is genuine. Mentors are quick to recognize perfunctory thanks, patronizing and other insincere gestures. Here are several best practices of successful mentoring partnerships:

- Be considerate of your mentor's time. As a rule, let him/her suggest extra minutes.
- Write a letter spelling out ways your mentor has helped you develop or succeed.
- Compliment him/her on accomplishments as well as character traits (such as creativity and perseverance).
- Leave a voice mail, or send an email or a handwritten note that expresses how much you enjoyed a conversation or meeting. Try to mention something specific that meant a lot to you.
- Smile and laugh when you're together.
- Ask for (and carefully consider) his/her advice, viewpoints, reactions, etc.
- Follow-up on advice and suggestions that your mentor provides. Let him/her know precisely how it was applied and the outcome.
- Invite her/him to a campus event.