

Go Hire/yourself a Mentor  
Find

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"If You Can, Find Yourself a Mentor"

Especially for Working Mothers

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If you are in work or in training and want to get ahead, you should try, if you can, to find a "mentor." What is a mentor? And, why should we find mentors? And, doesn't everybody say we should try to find "role models?" Is that different?

A role model is somebody you can learn to be like. Someone to model yourself after. We usually think of a role model as somebody like us, probably somebody of the same sex and race. Role models are wonderful; find them if you can. But, sometimes there is nobody around you that you really want to learn to be like.

Whether or not you find a role model, you can find mentors everywhere. Mentors can be any race or age or sex. You do not even have to like them; anyone can be your mentor as long as he or she is competent.

A mentor is a person who comments on your work, criticizing errors and praising excellence. This person sets high standards and teaches you to set and meet high standards. A mentor teaches you how The System works. If you are in a hospital, you learn the organization chart and also how the place really works. If you are in education or government; wherever you

are, you learn the organization chart and also how the place really works. Most important, you learn how to succeed in your studies, how to succeed in your work, how to get promoted.

Mentors teach you which problems are important and how to recognize them yourself. They "apprentice" you: to proposal writing, to better teaching, to giving presentations, to organizing meetings, to writing your resume. They introduce you to important networks; they talk about your work to others and find you jobs. Initially, they are your evaluators and the linkage to other evaluators. They teach you finally how to set your own goals, how to evaluate yourself realistically and how to succeed.

Many women find it hard to acquire a mentor. Senior women are exhausted and occasionally jealous of their uniqueness. Senior men sometimes ignore women or they advance on women as sex objects or they avoid women because they are sex objects and their wives would object. Junior women are often shy. What should you do?

Nearly any competent person can be helped to become your mentor:

1. Introduce yourself; make the first contact - always on a work-related subject. Go up after class, write a letter with a question, comment on his/her last article, send your work to her/him for comment. Be genuine and honest; you do not mean to "use" anybody. You are learning to find and use real help in a

real and genuine way.

2. Do it again, respectfully and intelligently.
3. Begin to ask for help about your errors and excellence. Cherish the good advice you are given and tell your mentor how helpful she/he is. (Tell them even if they brush it off or say it was nothing. Not enough people say "thank you").
4. See if you can "apprentice" yourself, as a research helper, sales aide, nursing assistant, teaching assistant, junior collaborator, proposal writer.
5. As you get to know your mentor be friendly, open and very professional. Get to know her or his spouse; introduce your own friends. Avoid sex with a mentor at all costs unless you plan marriage or you are so good that nothing can hurt you. If sex does become part of the relationship, keep yourself independent. If a lot of work is accomplished, make sure you get credit for it and try to be independent enough to move to another city if you have to, to advance.
6. Ask advice about your career advancement. Be cheerfully careful to express your appreciation for every decent thing your mentor does. (Most people you work with live in an inhuman environment and really appreciate decent behavior).
7. Consider building relationships with several mentors. Nobody

can be perfect at everything; you need advice from different people. And, you can learn to learn from everyone.

8. Do whatever you can to help your mentors forever after, and give credit in public for the help you've gotten. This reinforces good behavior everywhere. It will encourage you to become a first-rate mentor for other people. (With care and practice, you may even become a good role model for mentors!)



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