



AmericanCollege of
HealthcareExecutives
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ACHE Mentee Guide

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The appendices are a collection of ACHE articles on mentoring that offer further knowledge, tips and tools to enhance your mentoring relationships.

Disclaimer: For the ease of reading, we will refer to the mentor with feminine pronouns and the mentee with masculine pronouns throughout this guide.

ACHE sincerely thanks Pat Shehorn, LFACHE senior consultant to ACHE's Career Resource Center, for her contributions to the ACHE Mentor and Mentee Guides.

Chapter 1

Being a Mentee

First Things First: What is Mentoring?

It was Homer's epic tale *The Odyssey* that formally introduced us to the concept of mentoring: Mentor was a friend of Odysseus, who placed Mentor in charge of his son when Odysseus left for the Trojan War. Today, Merriam-Webster defines mentoring as a wise and trusted counselor or teacher; an influential senior sponsor or supporter. This is a good definition, but merely a starting point in the journey of understanding mentoring.

Mentoring is a relationship between two individuals, with the more experienced individual, the mentor, serving as coach, cheerleader, confidant, role model, devil's advocate, counselor and, when possible, a "door opener" for the mentee. It is a relationship based on trust and mutual respect in which both partners, the mentor and the mentee, have responsibilities and should benefit from the relationship.

Mentoring is all about learning and growing. At the professional level, both partners in the relationship are adults, so it is important to consider how we learn as adults. Malcolm S. Knowles, a noted practitioner and theorist of adult education, laid out the basic principles of adult learning in the 1970s. He says that critical to effective adult learning is one's own involvement in diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating their learning. In essence, adults like to be self-directed learners. Mentors don't have all the answers. What they do have is experience that may help them help you reflect and learn and grow. So as the mentee, you will be doing a lot of the work.

Some Myths About Mentoring

As a mentee, you are a subordinate.

Understanding what's involved in your role as a mentee—and how it differs from your role as a subordinate—is key to ensuring a meaningful mentoring experience. Your mentor's role as a manager and as a mentor may also seem very similar. In both roles she will serve as a combination of coach, confidant

and sounding board. However, as a mentor, she will need to be prepared to take on a broader, more personal relationship with you than the one she has established with her employees. The same holds true for you as the mentee. You are not the subordinate, but a partner in a personal, trusting, learning relationship. As a mentee, you are not answering to your mentor regarding your performance or whether you completed a project on time and on budget. Your mentor is there to provide you with perspective and questions that encourage learning and challenge you to think in new and creative ways. And unlike the manager/employee relationship, the mentor/mentee relationship extends beyond the typical workday or a traditional workplace role.

Once you have a mentor, they are your mentor for life.

Most professionals have a number of mentors throughout their careers. Remember that mentoring is a relationship based on learning and growing as an individual, and as a professional. Our needs as human beings change over time and with experience. Just as all of our relationships in life change over time, what we need in a mentor also changes over time. While needing/wanting a mentor is something you may repeat often during your lifetime, for the majority of us, any specific mentor/mentee relationship is of relatively short duration. While the length of time depends on you, your mentor and the mutually agreed upon goals that you will be focusing on, best practice suggests that about a year of meeting regularly is necessary in order to develop a relationship based on trust and respect, to work your way together through defining and then achieving the learning objectives of the relationship.

Living close to my mentor is important.

In today's global world, where families and friends are often spread far and wide, we are able to not only maintain close meaningful relationships but also develop new ones. Virtual mentoring is not only possible, it can have its benefits. A mentor from another part of the country may bring different

perspectives and insights than a mentor who may work in the same organization or city.

Mentoring from a distance does require a bit more thought, planning and focus. You will need to agree upon the primary method of meeting, be it by phone, Teams, FaceTime or some other Internet-based audio/visual tools.

My Role as Mentee

What you gain from a mentoring relationship has much to do with how open you are to learning; how willing you are to invest in developing a relationship of trust that requires time and energy; and how willing and open you are to being challenged, receiving candid feedback and being reflective. The most important thing you bring to the mentoring relationship is your willingness to learn and grow personally and professionally.

The mentee is usually the initiator of the mentor/mentee relationship, unless it is a structured, organizationally-based mentoring program. In either case, the relationship exists mainly for your growth and development, thus you need to take the lead. As such, you should be proactive not only in seeking out a mentor but in approaching the overall mentoring relationship with an agenda and coming to each mentoring conversation prepared with topics for discussion. It is up to you to communicate to your mentor how best you learn, how you communicate, what your objectives are and what your vision/dreams are for the future. The more insights into your learning and communication style and into your vision for the future, the better your mentor can assist you in your growth and development.

How To Be the Best Mentee

If you truly want a successful mentoring experience, you need to **come to the relationship motivated and empowered to plan and direct your own professional life**. It is you, the mentee, who will need to own the responsibility for your development, learning and professional growth.

First, you must be willing to **put in the time to develop an open and trusting relationship**. This will take months and requires your full effort. Without this foundation of trust, a meaningful learning/growth relationship cannot take hold. Trust has a lot to do with being open and honest with your mentor and **following through on your commitments**, so be sure to do what you say you are going to do between meetings.

Your mentor expects that you will **have a clear understanding of why you want to be mentored**. She expects that you understand that the mentoring relationship is **confidential** so that she will feel free to share her personal experiences with you. You should be able to clearly articulate your expectations of your mentor so that there can be a conversation and agreement upon those expectations early in the relationship. Refer to the section on the role of a mentor.

Be prepared for each mentoring session, **have an agenda**, yet **remain flexible** if the conversation takes you in a slightly different direction. Do create goals and milestones and remain focused on achieving what has been agreed upon in the mentoring sessions. You also need to **be a good listener**, **setting aside time for self-reflection**. You should be able to talk with your mentor about your preferred learning style. You must be able to **accept constructive criticism** and have the courage to provide feedback both positive and constructive to your mentor in order to maintain a healthy productive mentoring relationship.

Focus on the relationship, rather than the outcomes. Your mentor's job is not to get you your next job. It is important to be realistic in your expectations. If you build a strong trusting relationship with your mentor, they will help you in more ways than you can imagine.

Being the best mentee is much like "managing up," a common corporate term describing the process by which a subordinate takes ownership of the relationship, letting the boss, or in this case the mentor, know what he needs. This may be done by planning meeting agendas, asking questions, listening, paying attention, maintaining a positive attitude no matter what, keeping your mentor informed, working to understand your mentor's style and leaning into that style to promote better communication, **being sensitive to the mentor's needs**, completing agreed upon tasks, and requesting and giving honest feedback in a caring manner.

Mentee's Tools

In order to best learn and grow, it is important that you know yourself well and understand where you have been and how you grew into the person you are today.

Ask Questions

First, before starting a mentoring relationship ask yourself the following:

- What opportunities can this mentoring experience give me?
- What do I want to take away from this experience?
- What will be different for me as a result of this experience?
- What are my values/what motivates me?
- How do I learn best? By reading? By listening?
- Do I respond best to gentle guidance? Or structured, directed guidance?

As you proceed through the relationship, and as you are the one establishing the agenda for the conversations, make sure you are planning the agendas/conversations so they provide the most value to you. Suggested agendas can be found in the Tools section of Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. Be honest, don't be afraid to be direct and ask your mentor questions. Let your mentor know how you feel, what you think would be most helpful to talk about and ask your mentor those direct questions about what you want to know.

Self-Reflection/Personal Journey

Take the time to look back over your life as an adult: Look at those significant life events, both personal and work-related, that influenced you the most. This reflection can help you be a better mentee.

Write down the events, milestones and transitions that have had the most impact on who you are today. Remember that both positive and negative events play an important role regarding who we are, so list both. Then, think about **who** helped you to grow and think through these milestones as they were occurring. Finally, consider what you learned and how your direction or thinking changed as a result of these influential events and people.

Here's an example: Since Pat was a sophomore in high school, she wanted to be a physical therapist. Her dream came to fruition and she got a great job at a large city hospital. She never thought of doing anything more. Then, her boss asked her to take on a leadership role in the local Physical Therapy Association during her second year at the hospital. He told her that he thought she had leadership skills. She agreed and ended up leading the local chapter and being elected to a state office. With this new confidence in her leadership abilities, she decided to attend graduate school. Without her boss believing in her and opening the door to a local leadership role, Pat says she doesn't know if she would have landed her current position: hospital CEO.

Identifying Your Goal For The Mentoring Relationship

Why do you want a mentor now, at this time in your career? This is an important question to ask yourself and spend time determining before you embark on a mentoring relationship. Hopefully, you completed the self-reflection/ personal journey described above and have a sense of where you have been, and what and whom have made a significant difference in your professional development to date.

Now you need to spend some time thinking about the future and where you want to be. Sit down, close your eyes and relax. Put a smile on your face as you begin to **imagine yourself five years** from now...totally fulfilled and happy. Don't put up any roadblocks. Let the sky be the limit. To help crystalize your thoughts, ask yourself the following questions:

- What work am I doing?
- How am I making a difference in the organization/enterprise that I work for?
- What impact am I having on others?
- How have I grown as a person/as a professional?
- What skills have I acquired?

Generational Differences

While it is not appropriate to make generalizations about people or to assume that we know them based on where they are from, their sex, their religion, etc.,—it may be helpful to understand the context of the generation they grew up in and how it may differ from the characteristics typical of your generation. Being aware of your own generation and the attitudes and perspectives you hold that may have resulted from growing up in that era may help you become a better mentee and understand your mentor a little better. Likewise, while not generalizing, understanding the context that your mentor grew up in may be useful as you are asked questions and listen to your mentor's verbal and nonverbal communication. Based on this, we examined what many experts say about the potential impact of generational, cultural and other differences.

Working with Millennials

Those born between 1981 and 2000 are called Generation Y or more commonly, Millennials. This generation craves a work/life balance. They tend to have high expectations of their workplaces, desire flexible work hours and telecommuting, and prefer communicating electronically. They are known for being entrepreneurial and goal-oriented, and desire to make a positive difference in the world. Those in this generation grew up multitasking, being social and feeling confident. Generally, Millennials appreciate instant feedback and recognition. Millennials' No. 1 priority seems to be growth and development.

According to Lois J. Zachary, an internationally recognized expert on mentoring, Millennial mentors should offer hands-on experience that will empower their mentee to take the next step. She states, "They [Millennials] prefer positive, collaborative, achievement-oriented mentors who take them seriously" (2012, p. 53). If you are a Millennial and this is what you prefer, let your mentor know.

Working with Gen Xers

Born between 1965 and 1980, Gen Xers watched their parents work hard to "have it all," and consequently this generation typically seeks a healthy work/life balance. The generation is known for being independent and entrepreneurial. They are largely self-reliant, but value a diverse workplace. Gen Xers seem to prefer immediate feedback and like to communicate via email.

According to Zachary, Gen Xers want a mentor who is not only competent but also one who is direct, yet informal, in their style. She notes in her book, *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships*, that due to their independent nature, a hands-off approach may be best in working with Gen Xers. When mentoring a Gen Xer, Zachary advises mentors to "encourage creativity and initiative" and help our "mentees discover new approaches, set expectations, raise the bar and then turn them loose to figure out how to achieve their goals" (Zachary, 2012, p. 52). If this describes you and how you best deal with feedback, learn and develop, discuss this with your mentor.

Working with Boomers

Those born between 1946 and 1964, or the post-World War II generation, are known as baby boomers and tend to be optimistic, competitive and goal-driven. While they may put in long hours and their work/life balanced may be skewed toward work, many boomers just want to make a difference in the world. They seek recognition and reward for their efforts, and expect the same type of commitment and hard work of others. Based on this traditionalist concept, many baby boomers may believe that the right mentoring relationship should be mentor-directed. Boomers are often asked to be mentors because of their desire to make a difference and because they tend to hold senior leadership positions. If your mentor is a boomer and you are feeling that she is directing the relationship rather than helping you learn and develop, be honest with her. Suggest that you would prefer to discover things on your own, while you appreciate her questions, advice and coaching.

Boomers also want and need a mentor at times. When mentoring a boomer, keep in mind that this generation typically wants to be shown respect, appreciates recognition for their accomplishments and likes to be intellectually challenged. Remember that while some baby boomers are tech savvy, some may be reluctant to use newer methods of technology since they did not grow up with computers.

Cultural Differences

In addition to generational differences, it may be helpful to consider cultural differences, as these differences may impact the mentoring relationship. If this is the case, you may wish to discuss with your mentor what mentorship means in each of your cultures, whether organizational or national. Explore how giving and getting advice might be different across cultures, especially if you work at different levels in the organization. For example, in some cultures, directives are expected from people in senior positions, while a suggested range of options might be baffling. Some cultures expect some type of criticism, while others bristle at hearing anything negative. Bottom line, if you are entering a mentoring relationship with someone from another culture, learn everything you can about how your differences might affect your relationship and take this into account as you build the relationship.

Additional Differences

Differences can be good in a relationship, yet it seems to be best if we understand those differences in each other so that we can keep things in context. We described generational differences and cultural differences above but there are many more differences that can impact any relationship, including the mentoring relationship. Age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, upbringing and life experiences are all factors that influence how we see the world, how we behave, how we react to people and situations, and how we interpret things.

It is important to keep in mind that the mentoring relationship exists within this context of the two individuals from very different life experiences in some ways. As a mentee, you need to work to get to know and then respect the context of your mentor's life and then consciously try to use it while being sensitive and respectful of your mentor's needs, which may be very different than your own.

For example, say a 50-year-old male is mentoring a 34-year-old male who is a promising young executive. The mentor rapidly moved up the ranks to the C-suite while his wife stayed home to raise their family and he missed many birthdays, anniversaries, athletic events and music recitals. After just one and half years in his current position, the mentee's military wife is being transferred to another city. If the mentor and mentee had not developed a relationship that helped the mentor understand the importance to his mentee to support his wife and participate 50/50 with her in raising their children while growing his career, there could have been a problem with the relationship and the ability of the mentee to move forward with his developmental plan. Instead, the mentor was supportive of his mentee and worked to assist him with networking.

Even though both individuals were males following similar career paths leading to the C-Suite, their backgrounds and experiences were very different. It would have been easy for this mentor to tell his mentee that he was making a mistake. Because this mentor had become aware of his own filters, how he saw the world and recognized that it was just one way to do things, he was able to look at his mentee's way of getting to the C-suite and support him down a very different path.

CHAPTER 2

My Mentor

Role of the Mentor

The role of the mentor is primarily one of facilitating learning and growth and creating and maintaining a supportive environment so the relationship can flourish and learning can take place. Your development as the mentee should always be at the forefront with your mentor, who should be facilitating your self-directed learning.

Perhaps it is effective to state what a mentor is not. A mentor is not the Wizard of Oz behind the curtain that you come to for all of the answers. In fact, one of the main roles of the mentor is to ask good questions so that you come up with your own answers.

Expectations of the Mentor

Your mentor can help you identify goals and discover objectives you may wish to set. She will manage the learning experience and keep you focused on your goals, objectives and learning strategies.

At different points in the relationship, the role of the mentor may take on that of a coach: giving you advice and guidance, sharing ideas and providing feedback. At other times, the mentor can be a source of encouragement and support for you, acting as a sounding board for ideas/concerns or providing insights into possible opportunities.

Your mentor should be a good listener. She should be open-minded and compassionate, patient and honest with you. She may need to deliver some tough love in the form of constructive criticism or honest feedback, serving as a mirror to help you reflect on a particular situation. It will be important that you remain open to this feedback.

Your mentor is also there to challenge you by setting high expectations and encouraging you. They may occasionally play the “devil’s advocate” to help you think through important decisions. She is also there to share some of her experiences with you, not to tell you what to do, but rather to share with you how she may have handled a similar issue or challenge in her career.

Selecting a Mentor

Whether you are asking someone to be your mentor or an organization is assigning a criteria-based match as your mentor, your decision to participate in a mentoring relationship needs to be made after careful, purposeful deliberation.

In Chapter 1 we talked about identifying your goals for the mentoring relationship. With that in mind, ask yourself the following questions:

- Why do you want a mentor? What do you hope she can help you with?
- What qualities would you like in a mentor?
- What are the qualities that are most important to you in your mentor? (Think about the generational, age, gender and other differences that we discussed in Chapter 1.) Which qualities are essential or nonnegotiable?
- Am I committed to getting to know this stranger, investing in the relationship and allowing her to challenge me and help me develop professionally?
- Am I willing to communicate openly and honestly so that my mentor really gets to know me and I her so that we understand and respect the other’s perspective?
- Do I have the time over the next year to dedicate adequate attention to this relationship?

CHAPTER 3

Starting the Journey

PREPARING FOR INITIAL CONTACT

So, you now have the name and contact information of your mentor. You may have some anxiety about where to start, what to say and what to do if the two of you don't immediately hit it off. You can be sure that your mentor is having similar anxiety.

Some programs have the mentor be the one to make initial contact, whereas some put that responsibility on the mentee. However, If you don't hear from your mentor within two weeks of receiving her name and contact information, you may wish to take the initiative and reach out to her. Either way, remember that first impressions are important. These first impressions can set the tone for the relationship. If you are the one to reach out, it will be important for you to have an agenda for that first contact.

AGENDA FOR INITIAL CONTACT

Whether via phone, email or Teams, the following suggestions may leave a good first impression and facilitate the development of a good relationship. While this first contact is mostly task oriented, it will lay important groundwork. Before that first conversation, you may want to see what you can find out about your mentor online: Try to find her on LinkedIn, **ACHE Member Directory** or simply Google her name. Then, for that first conversation:

- Introduce yourself, let your mentor know how you prefer to be addressed and ask your mentor how she would like to be addressed. Learn how to pronounce the name of your mentor.
- Tell your mentor a little about yourself and ask your mentor to tell you a little about her.
- Discuss the needs, expectations and limitations that each of you may have, for example, you may mention that you will not be available on weekends or the last week of the month due to your meeting schedule.
- Agree upon a meeting schedule and whether you will meet via phone, Teams or in person, preferably every two weeks for at least an hour each time, at least initially.
- Talk about the respect for each other's time and thus how best to cancel or reschedule a meeting. Commit to doing your best to keep changes to a minimum and try to obtain agreement from your mentor that they will do the same. Agree on how to communicate the need to make changes in the schedule. Is an email, text or phone call the best way to convey the need to change a meeting or to speak in between meetings if advice or support is required in a crisis?
- End the meeting on a positive note, noting that you are looking forward to getting to know your mentor and to working with her. Thank them for her willingness to be your mentor.
- Let your mentor know that you will develop an agenda for your first meeting. Ask her if she would like you to email the agenda to her in advance.

Remember, relationships take time and they take work. The first few months of your mentoring experience should focus on building a trusting, respectful relationship.

The typical lifespan of a mentoring relationship is six months to a year and often follows the phases described below, which are outlined in greater detail in the forthcoming chapters:

- Starting the Journey—Chapter 3
- Building and Nurturing the Relationship (approximately two months)—Chapter 4
- Working Toward the Goals (approximately two months)—Chapter 5
- Hitting Our Stride (approximately four to eight months)—Chapter 6
- Phase Out/Closure—Chapter 7

CHAPTER 4

Phase 1: Building & Nurturing the Relationship

Expectations for the First Two Months

This is a critical time as you lay the groundwork for your mentoring relationship during these first few months. It is important that you spend the time getting to know one another, preferably meeting as often as every two weeks, if possible. This is the time to get clarity about each other's expectations regarding the relationship, and for both you and your mentor to understand your own skills and gain an understanding of each other's contexts. Do not rush through this phase, as it is critical to the long-term success of the mentoring relationship.

MEETING AGENDAS

You, as the mentee, should be developing an agenda for each session. You want to engage your mentor in meaningful conversation from the start, going beyond job responsibilities and titles and focusing on each other as people—your histories, cultures, what you like/dislike, etc. Hopefully you have completed your self-reflection/personal journey exercise discussed in Chapter 1, so you have some insights about yourself: how you got to where you are, who helped and supported you along the way, and what/whom was most effective in influencing you on your life journey. You can begin to share some of that with your mentor and ask her to share with you a little about her personal journey, current position, culture, likes and dislikes, etc.

Over the course of the first two months, work your way through the suggested agendas below. Try to describe to your mentor where you see yourself headed in your career and what your development goals are. Your mentor will likely have questions about how your goals align with where you want to be. She will be trying to gain clarity so she truly understands you, your goals and what is important to you. Talk about your personal communication and learning style and ask your mentor about hers. Clarify what you are hoping for from this mentoring relationship and ask your mentor what they would like from this relationship. Sample agendas/conversation questions can be found in the tool section of this chapter.

Before concluding each meeting, together review the agenda and what you accomplished at the meeting. Talk openly about whether you each believe that you had substantive versus superficial discussion and whether you each feel that you are advancing in your level of trust. Finally, agree on next steps and the next meeting agenda. This is a time that your mentor may suggest you read something or complete an assessment, such as the ACHE Healthcare Executive Competencies Assessment Tool, to prepare for your next discussion.

Remember the goal of this phase is to build a strong foundation of trust and understanding of each other. This will take multiple conversations over a period of about approximately two months. Before moving on to the next phase, use the checklist in the tools section of this chapter to assure that you have established a firm foundation of trust and understanding.

TOOLS

Agenda	Conversations
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell your mentor about you/ask about her. • Share a little of your personal journey/ask about her personal journey. • Talk about each other's current professional situation. • Talk about each other's leadership values and philosophies. • Discuss ground rules that may assist in building the relationship (see chart below).
Getting to Know You (<i>multiple meetings</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share some previous mentoring experiences with each other. What did you like/what didn't you like? • Share why each of you want to engage in this relationship. • Discuss what each of you see as your role in the relationship and if your views differ, how to resolve or how the differences may impact the relationship. Try to clarify what you, as the mentee, are trying to accomplish with this mentoring relationship. • Describe to your mentor where you see yourself headed in your career. • Share your broad development goals and how these relate to where you see yourself headed. • Discuss your learning style and both of your personal styles. If either or both of you have your results from the Myers-Briggs or DISC, you can use these tools in your discussion.
Ending Each Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss expectations regarding open and honest feedback with one another and ask for that feedback at the end of every meeting. • Agree upon next steps and the next meeting agenda.

Phase 1: Building & Nurturing the Relationship

Ground Rules For Mentoring Relationship

- We will start and end all meetings on time.
- We will use our agendas to keep us on track.
- We will both participate fully in the conversation.
- We will be open and honest with each other in a respectful manner.
- We will respect each other’s differences and not make judgments.
- We will keep our conversations confidential.
- If we come across an issue of disagreement or concern, we will discuss it openly.
- If the relationship does not work out, we will discuss this and see what we can each learn from it.

Checklist Before Moving To Phase 2

- _____ Am I truly invested in my development?
- _____ Do I feel that we are communicating openly and honestly?
- _____ Do we seem to understand and agree upon each of our roles in this relationship?
- _____ Can I commit to adequate time for follow through with any assignments from my mentor?
- _____ Am I gaining trust and respect for my mentor?

CHAPTER 5

Phase 2: Working Toward the Goals

Expectations for the Next Two Months

The good news is that if you have made it this far in your mentoring relationship both you and your mentor are committed to continue. In this phase, you are working as much on the relationship building as you are on the task of addressing your developmental goals. Again, during this phase, it is highly recommended that you continue to meet twice a month, if possible. In this phase, the focus should be on clarifying your goals, developing a plan to tackle these goals and beginning the work. Your objective during this phase is to develop commitment to a set of goals and an approach to moving toward those goals.

You may wish to codify the goals and commitments that you are making to each other in a written Mentoring Partnership Agreement. Some find this helpful to keep them on track toward achieving goals. A sample agreement is in the tools section of this chapter. If you do decide to use an agreement, keep it simple.

Meeting Agendas

While it is important to continue building the trusting relationship, now is the time to begin building the plan. While you may have come to the relationship with a clearly defined goal, most mentees come with only a broadly defined goal. It is important for your mentor to truly understand your goal rather than assume they understand what you mean. Your mentor will likely need to ask you a number of clarifying questions so she comes to understand exactly what you mean and where you want to go. For example, you may say your goal is to move into a position with a better title, higher salary and location closer to your family within the next year. Rather than assuming that she knows what you mean, your mentor may need to ask questions such as "Could you describe what a 'better title' means to you?" and "What do you think is needed in order to reach that goal?" Your mentor is not challenging you or questioning the validity of your goal, she is merely trying to assure that she holds the same definition of your goal as you do.

If you, like most mentees, come with only a broadly defined goal, your mentor can assist you in thinking through your goals and helping you to make those goals as specific and quantifiable as possible. To assist you in creating and aligning your developmental goals with your current role and/or aspirational role or targets, complete the Mentee Developmental Goal Assessment in the tools section of this chapter. Work on examining the gap between your requirements and what an employer or role offers to you, as well as examining what you bring to the table in relation to what an employer or role requires. This gap analysis can form the basis of a work plan and frame discussions for the next phase of mentoring. ACHE also has an excellent competencies assessment tool available online called the ACHE Healthcare Executive Competencies Assessment Tool. This tool can assist healthcare leaders in assessing their expertise in critical areas of healthcare management, helping them better understand what may be needed to reach their desired/future goals or targets.

We stated at the beginning of this guide that mentoring is all about learning and growing. A work plan can keep you and your mentor focused on this learning, growth and development and may help keep the relationship on track. Refer to Sample Work Plan in the tools section of this chapter.

TOOLS

To create an effective developmental plan, it is important to look at your requirements, what you need to fulfill these requirements, what you currently have to offer and what is required for success. Assess whether these are in or out of balance and if so, by how much and what you must do to bring them into balance. In doing so, you will discover areas in which your skills and attributes are currently relevant or in need of development, as well as determine what factors might increase your level of satisfaction. After answering the questions, you should look for gaps with the help of your mentor, then move forward and develop a work plan.

Mentee Developmental Goal Assessment

<p>Your Requirements For Work/Life Fulfillment</p> <p>What are my values and interests?</p> <p>What do I need to keep my life in balance?</p> <p>What are my developmental needs?</p>	<p>Contributions To Your Work/Life Fulfillment From Your Current Or Desired Role</p> <p>What is the culture of the organization?</p> <p>What benefits will help me achieve this life balance?</p> <p>What are my growth opportunities?</p>
<p>Contributions To Your Current Role Or Desired Role</p> <p>How do I deliver value?</p> <p>What are my skills and talents?</p> <p>What is my competitive advantage?</p>	<p>Requirements For Success In Your Current Or Desired Role</p> <p>What is the mission and key objective for the organization?</p> <p>What skillsets are needed to achieve success?</p> <p>What changes may impact the organization’s requirements?</p>

Work Plan for Mentoring Relationship

Mentee’s Goal:

	Objectives	Action Plan	Resources Needed	Target Date
1.				
2.				
3.				

Sample Mentoring Partnership Agreement

Mentor/Mentee Agreement

We the undersigned hereby agree on the following:

The goals and objectives of our mentoring relationship are as follows:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

We agree to meet regularly. The time committed to this relationship will be as follows:

Our meetings will typically last for one hour and occur twice a month for the first four to six months, followed by monthly meetings during the remainder of our relationship, up to an anticipated period of 12 months. We commit to reevaluating the relationship and both understand that this relationship may end sooner than the originally projected 12 months. Our specific meeting schedule will be as follows:

If either of us needs to reschedule a meeting, we will do so only in a real emergency and will notify the other via phone/text/email (agree on one) no later than _____ (hours/days) in advance.

We agreed to the following set of ground rules: *(See sample in Chapter 4, Tools section)*

We agree to provide routine feedback to each other and evaluate our relationship at least every _____ months by openly discussing our sense of how the relationship is working for us and how we each feel we are progressing toward the mentoring relationship goals as described above.

We agree that when one or both of us feel it is time to terminate the relationship that we will discuss this and either mutually agree to terminate or develop a plan to get the relationship back on track.

Mentor’s Signature

Mentee’s Signature

Date

Date

Checklist Before Moving to Phase 3

- _____ Goals are clearly defined and understood by both mentor and mentee.
- _____ Mentor and mentee have agreed upon meeting routinely, the ground rules for the relationship and the preferred feedback method.
- _____ Agreement has been reached regarding the expectations and responsibilities of each party.
- _____ A work plan is in place that is based on learning/growth and development with timelines for completing the work and agreement on periodic checks to reevaluate and modify the plan as well as check progress.
- _____ I remain committed to working toward my goals, working with my mentor and following through on her assignments/suggestions.

CHAPTER 6

Phase 3: Hitting Our Stride

Expectations for the Next Three to Six Months You have made it to the best part of the mentoring relationship. You have laid a foundation for trust and open communication, agreed upon how you will work together, laid out ground rules and expectations of one another, and have a mutually agreed upon work plan in place. Now, it's time to put the plan in motion. During this phase you will likely want to slowly move to meeting once a month with brief updates in between.

You will now begin implementing your action plan toward your objectives. During this phase, your mentor will focus on supporting you, challenging you and providing the vision of possibilities to help you grow and develop. It is likely that you will often need her support. It is important that you let your mentor know how you are feeling and when you just need someone to listen without judgment. Your mentor may start asking you questions that will cause you to reflect and articulate your own thinking. Ask your mentor if they have ever encountered something similar to what you are encountering or feeling, then have her share some stories from her personal journey that relate to what you are experiencing.

To get the most out of your mentoring relationship, you will need to stretch and your mentor can assist you by challenging you to do things that may take you out of your comfort zone. This can take the form of setting tasks for you, such as "I think it would be good for you between now and our next meeting to arrange an informational interview with ... to get her perspective on ... " Other ways your mentor may challenge you might include asking what if questions based on different hypotheses or setting high standards for you that may scare you, trusting that you will follow through and at least try.

Whatever you do, do not lose sight of your goals, that future state that you want to reach. Also recognize that you may want to talk with your mentor about stepping back and re-evaluating your goals and objectives and reframing them.

Critical to this phase in the mentoring relationship is feedback. It is the most powerful way for learning to occur. Remember to provide your feedback honestly. Make your feedback relevant, practical and specific, as your mentor cannot read minds. Talk about your fears or insecurities, likely your mentor has experienced something similar. Remember you want to achieve your goals, let your mentor help you and support you. For them to be able to do this, they need your open, honest communication and they need to see that you are working harder than they are toward achieving your goals.

Meeting Agendas

Your meetings should switch focus from what is the goal to how are we doing in reaching that goal. Each meeting should begin by doing a quick review of what was done at the last meeting, how it felt and what could have been done differently now that you each have had time to think about it. Next, update your mentor on your current situation particularly as it relates to the plan and any progress you may have made on your action plan to achieve your goals. What is working, what is not working, how you are feeling about it, etc. Remember to stay focused on the plan and on the purpose of the relationship, which is your growth and development.

To help you decide when it may be time to phase out of this mentoring relationship or redefine it, use the checklist at the end of the tools section of this chapter.

TOOLS

Agenda	Conversations
Start of Each Meeting (Past Focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did we do at the last meeting? • How do each of us feel about it? Are there things we might have done/said differently now that we have had time to think about it? • Review any action items that you both had agreed upon.
Majority of Each Meeting (Current Focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an update on your current situation particularly as it relates to the plan. • Provide a progress report on action plan items. • Discuss what's working and what is not working relative to the action plan as it relates to achieving the goal. Discuss how you are feeling about your progress and the plan. • Revise objectives and action plan if needed.
Ending Each Meeting (Future Focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on actions to be completed before the next meeting. • Discuss expectations regarding open and honest feedback with one another and ask for that feedback at the end of every meeting. • Agree upon next steps and the next meeting agenda.

Checklist Before Moving to Phase 4

- _____ I am still learning and growing.
- _____ I am still committed to and moving forward in pursuit of my goals.
- _____ The feedback I am giving is honest, thoughtful and constructive.
- _____ We are continuing to build and maintain a productive relationship.
- _____ There are no subjects that seem too difficult to discuss in our relationship.

CHAPTER 7

Phase 4: Phase Out/Closure

Ending the Relationship

While the location of this chapter may make it appear that closure comes neatly after you and your mentor have developed a trusting, respectful relationship, closure may come at any point during the relationship.

You may have noticed in the sample Mentor/Mentee Agreement in Chapter 5 that the agreement asked both parties to openly evaluate how the relationship is working and if there is a thought or desire to stop the relationship, whether it be one or both of you, that you will have a discussion. Both parties go into a mentoring relationship with high hopes. Sometimes the relationship just doesn't work out. No matter when one or both of you come to the realization that it is time to end the relationship, it is important to discuss it together.

Closure even after a successful mentoring relationship can be challenging and stressful. Sometimes, it may be that one person in the relationship has experienced a life or job change that shifts her attention and ability to focus on a mentoring relationship. Or it may be that you or your mentor are fearful of bringing up the topic of closure to avoid hurting the other person's feelings. Although the relationship may have been professionally fulfilling for both, it has run its course/achieved the agreed upon goals and has consequently grown stale. One or both of you may find it more comfortable to maintain the status quo than to engage in an awkward discussion.

No matter the reason, appropriate closure is important for both parties. To set the stage for the end, it is best to discuss the end at the beginning and periodically throughout the relationship. You may wish to add an item to your agenda every few months such as "How are each of us feeling about this relationship? What do we think about the value and longevity of this relationship?"

Just because the mentoring relationship ends, that does not mean that you can't maintain a relationship, be it as friend or colleague. Don't burn any bridges behind you. Work to have an honest conversation. Provide your mentor with your rationale for terminating the mentor/mentee relationship, listen to what she says carefully and respond to her thoughts in a nondefensive, nonjudgmental manner.

As the mentoring relationship is one of learning, growth and development, the relationship's end should serve as a learning conclusion. The ideal ending conversation should focus on the learning that took place during the relationship—not just the learning as the mentee, but also what your mentor has learned. We all learn from good experiences as well as from the not so good experiences. Look at the pluses and minuses of the relationship. Make every effort to have the ending be as positive as possible.

TOOLS

Is It Time For Closure?

- _____ I have met my learning goals.
- _____ It feels as though we are meeting just to meet.
- _____ We have been meeting for months and do not seem to be making any progress.
- _____ I have no desire to follow through between meetings on what we discussed.
- _____ I feel there is no value to meeting with my mentor.

CHAPTER 8

Celebration & the Future

Summarize the Learning/Focusing on the Positive

The healthy discussion at closure provides you and your mentor with the opportunity to evaluate the learning outcomes and hopefully discuss how you might build on your learning as you move forward in your career and your life. Look back over the goals that you developed early in your mentoring relationship. Then ask yourself what you learned/accomplished relative to each objective. For example, if one of your objectives was to position yourself for a position with greater responsibility, describe to your mentor the progress you feel that you made toward that objective.

You may be surprised at what your mentor learned about herself. Ask your mentor to share with you what she learned about herself through this relationship. That conversation may go something like this:

Mentor: I have observed that you have grown more sure of yourself over the past year.

Mentee: You know, you're right. I do feel more confident and am now giving my opinions more often at meetings.

Mentor: That's terrific! You have taught me a lot about patience and the importance of listening this year. I am finding that my leadership team is being more open with me, so thank you.

Most of us have had a number of mentors at different points in our lives. Many of them have remained a friend or colleague that we touch base with periodically or think of from time to time with fondness. Ending the formal mentoring relationship should be done in a way that is focused on the future and leaves the relationship open to evolve into something different.

Celebrating

Most of us don't take the time to celebrate, we often look at something as done and move on to the next thing. However, celebration at the end of the mentoring relationship is important as it reinforces the learning that has taken place and helps with transitioning to the next phase, much like the graduation ceremony did when we completed our degree.

Some suggestions for celebrating may include a face-to-face get-together if you have been mentoring via computer-mediated methods. A written note expressing your gratitude to your mentor can be an expression of celebration, providing a permanent reminder of the relationship and its successes. You and your mentor may wish to exchange a meaningful memento. Any mementos should not be expensive—perhaps a book of reflections that will help continue the learning that began during the mentoring relationship.

The Future

Take the time to be honest about whether there will be a future relationship.

If you do wish to continue the relationship, agree whether it should be touching base periodically over email or phone or something more formal such as setting new learning goals and continuing the mentoring experience.

Whatever you agree upon about the future relationship, know that each of you will likely feel a loss. You have bonded over the past year or so. You have confided in each other and learned together. Your mentor may worry about you or wonder how you are doing. You may miss the support and feedback your mentor provided. The good news is that you may likely hear from each other when you least expect it over the years. A voicemail, email or note letting her know about an accomplishment may unexpectedly make her day.

Now that you have agreed upon your future relationship with your mentor, it is time for you to do a self-evaluation. See the tool section of this chapter for a sample self-assessment tool. Perhaps you should add this experience to the personal journey reflection you did at the start of the relationship. Ask yourself: How has this mentoring experience changed you? What did you learn from this relationship? How can you use what you learned in future mentoring relationships? Are you ready to be a mentor and/or to select another mentor?

You learned and/or practiced many skills as a mentee. The first of these was **reflection**: looking at your life, your personal journey, where you have been and where you wanted to go. You started reflecting in preparation for your first meeting with your mentor and honed that skill throughout the entire relationship.

As the agenda setter, you actually became the facilitator of the conversations and **facilitation** is key to being an effective mentor in the future. As a mentee you had ample opportunity to practice your **listening** skills, listening to your mentor and reflecting on her words and ideas.

Hopefully you not only received much **feedback** over the course of your relationship, but you also provided open and honest feedback to your mentor during this time as you worked to build a relationship of trust.

These are four of the vital skills of a mentor. So, think about it. Think about your abilities to effectively use these skills. Then answer the following questions: Do you enjoy helping others? Would you like to help another person succeed professionally? Do you enjoy helping others learn more about themselves and set and achieve their goals? If so, consider becoming a mentor.

TOOLS

Take a moment to reflect on your experience by completing the following:

Mentee Self-Assessment

	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
I made myself available regularly, established the agendas and followed through on any assignments.				
I was truly present during our conversations.				
I shared personal experiences and information openly.				
I was satisfied with the level of trust we achieved in our relationship.				
Our discussions were substantive.				
I established solid goals and objectives.				
I met my learning goals and objectives.				
We had a good discussion about closure.				
I feel good about the mentoring relationship.				
I am considering becoming a mentor.				

In addition to your developmental learning, what were your learnings about the skills that make a mentee/mentor relationship successful?

CHAPTER 9

The ACHE Leadership Mentoring Network

ACHE created the Leadership Mentoring Network to expand opportunities for learning and development exclusively for ACHE members. This service is not intended for students, nor is its intent to find employment for mentees; rather it is designed for healthcare executives who are employed full-time and are seeking growth as leaders and professionals.

The Leadership Mentoring Network maintains the classic one-to-one mentoring experience, while relying primarily on a contemporary combination of communication channels such as phone, email, Teams and FaceTime. Face-to-face meetings will likely be the exception, not the rule. Using this approach, mentoring partnerships can develop even between individuals separated by great distances. Mentoring partnerships initially are expected to be established with a specific purpose and for a limited time. Successful mentoring partners are encouraged to expand their focus and continue their relationship as long as they wish.

Prospective mentors and mentees must file a personal profile with ACHE's Career Resource Center at [ache.org/Leadership-MentoringNetwork](https://www.ache.org/Leadership-MentoringNetwork) so that CRC may identify appropriate matches.

To help you decide whether this mentoring approach will work for you, consider the following checklist:

- _____ I am seeking a mentoring option that is flexible regardless of my career stage or level in my organization.
- _____ I am interested in a mentoring relationship that may occur through email and telephone communication, not requiring face-to-face interaction.
- _____ I am looking for a mentoring experience that is development driven; that is, as mentee, I will identify specific leadership development goals to work on within the mentor-mentee partnership.

_____ I am comfortable with a loosely structured approach to mentoring that is worked out by the mentor and mentee.

Note: The Leadership Mentoring Network operates thanks to the service of dedicated volunteers. While their numbers are growing, their supply is finite. Consequently, we must limit the mentor and mentee pairings to ACHE members who currently hold healthcare management positions.

Other Options for ACHE Members Considering Participating in Mentoring

In addition to the national ACHE Leadership Mentoring Network, some ACHE local chapters have mentoring programs uniquely tailored to their own environments. For example, local mentoring programs may be designed to help Members pass the Board of Governors examination. Others may help early careerists to grow and prepare for greater responsibilities in the future. Use the Chapter Directory to find the chapter in your area for further information at [ache.org/Chapters](https://www.ache.org/Chapters).

Members who are in full-time education, training or job search modes may instead consider the benefits of ACHE's Career Advising Network. The network consists of a different pool of volunteers who have agreed to be resources for individuals considering career directions or making transitions between healthcare sectors or locations. Learn more at <https://www.ache.org/career-resource-center/develop-your-network/career-advising-network>.

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Tackling Important Conversations Virtually

Get the most out of meetings when they can't be face-to-face.

Regardless of the circumstances, executives are always seeking effective, efficient methods of communication. But these days, when face-to-face communication can be risky and even irresponsible, executives need virtual ways to communicate that are just as effective and meaningful as face-to-face encounters.

Virtual meetings and online methods of communication aren't fads or stopgaps until teams can gather again in the same space. For many, communicating in the virtual space has become the preferred method of doing business, presenting executives with a new set of challenges. Mastering the seemingly endless number of online tools designed to help us better communicate regardless of where we are, all while balancing work responsibilities with personal responsibilities as

we work from home, can be frustrating, confusing and discouraging.

Following are strategies for getting the most out of day-to-day work communications, engaging with remote employees and having meaningful conversations—virtually.

Good Manners Equals Great Communication

Many of us have been working remotely for months; however, we can't let our guard down and forget virtual meeting etiquette. Some recommendations for maintaining good virtual meeting manners include:

Have an agenda and stick to it. If possible, send out an agenda a day or two before the meeting. An accurate agenda not only lets everyone know exactly what will be discussed but

also gives meeting participants the opportunity to ask or answer questions prior to the meeting.

Punctuality matters. When participating in a virtual meeting, a tardy host is almost as frustrating as the recurring chime that announces the addition of a latecomer. Arrive a few minutes early and have the meeting program running in the background of your computer while you are working on other tasks. Finishing a meeting on time is just as important as arriving on time.

Remove potential distractions. Silence your mobile phones, block time on your shared calendar, close the window to unnecessary websites, and let others who are working or living in your virtual office space know that you're in a meeting and are not to be disturbed, if possible.

Mute yourself. Unless you're presenting, be sure to mute yourself. It's amazing how much background noise microphones pick up.

Dress for success. Although many bedrooms currently are doubling as home offices, loungewear is never acceptable office attire.

The Bottom Line

Preserve Team Connections

Here are simple ways leaders can preserve connections with their teams:

- **Prioritize daily face-to-face check-ins.** A 10-minute "huddle meeting" at a set time each day can foster an atmosphere of collaboration and teamwork.
- **Celebrate milestones and accomplishments—regardless of size.** Though we might not be physically together, that shouldn't stop us from getting together in the virtual space to celebrate each other.
- **Collaborate and educate.** When meeting with your peers, include time on your agenda for ongoing training, best practice sharing and problem-solving.
- **Do lunch.** Consider sending lunch via food delivery apps to one person or your entire team.

Can You Hear Me Now?

"Sorry, I was on mute." "Can everyone hear me?" We all want to be heard. And when communicating in the virtual space, it's often difficult to know if we're being heard or seen or even understood. Prior to 2020, most of us took for granted those little acknowledgements that let us know when we had successfully connected with another co-worker. Today, most of us aren't able to give our co-workers an encouraging pat

on the shoulder, provide a hug to someone who might be grieving, or even onboard a new employee with a tour of the office and traditional meet-and-greet welcome lunch.

For many, communicating in the virtual space has become the preferred method of doing business.

With remote work and the use of virtual platforms the norm for the time being, finding connections with each other is critical to preserving our mental health and ensuring a necessary standard of production to remain successful. Here are simple ways leaders can preserve connections with their teams:

Prioritize daily face-to-face check-ins. A quick, 10-minute “huddle meeting” with your team at a set time each day can foster an atmosphere of collaboration and teamwork. Ask all participants to turn on their video, if possible. We all communicate much more effectively when we can be heard and seen.

Celebrate milestones and accomplishments—regardless of size.

Though we might not be physically together, that shouldn't stop us from getting together in the virtual space to celebrate each other and our accomplishments. Continue celebrating birthdays, work anniversaries and team wins—big and small.

Collaborate and educate. As an executive, you're part of a senior leadership team. Being a good team member includes sharing helpful

information with other leaders. When meeting with your peers, include time on your agenda for ongoing training, best practice sharing and problem-solving. “What are you currently reading?” is a great question to spark an information-sharing session.

Do lunch. Remember how nice it was to get out of the office for a bit and share a bite to eat? It's still possible to create that same atmosphere of connection and conversation, even when working remotely. Consider sending lunch via food delivery apps to one person or your entire team.

Stepping Up Your Virtual Meeting Game

Virtual meeting platforms provide built-in tools that can help increase engagement in an online setting. Some examples of how to use these tools effectively include:

- **Incorporate polling questions** throughout meetings to gauge participants' interest and enthusiasm.
- **Use virtual whiteboard features**, such as the one available on Zoom and other platforms, which allow for collaboration and brainstorming and the (virtual) space necessary to organize those ideas.
- **Create smaller work groups with breakout rooms.** Breakout room features allow meeting participants to work together in smaller groups and then rejoin the larger group as a whole, all without having to schedule separate meetings.
- **Educate team members** on how to use any of the features you plan to use during a meeting. A quick

“tech crunch” session will ensure everyone knows how and when to use these tools effectively.

When an In-Person Meeting Is Needed

All executives are tasked with performing duties such as delivering difficult news, negotiating contracts or disciplining an employee. Meetings related to these situations are best conducted in person. Face-to-face interactions allow meeting participants to share a common space, where distractions are minimized and technological issues eliminated. Unlike virtual meetings, an executive can control the environment of the in-person meeting and keep distractions and interruptions to a minimum. In-person meetings allow for a fuller sense of connection and trust over virtual meetings. Unlike virtual meetings where only facial expressions can be seen, in-person meetings allow executives to take note of the full body language and react accordingly.

It's no secret that 2020 was a rough year. And as much as we would like to think that the challenges we faced in 2020 would simply disappear with the turn of the calendar, we have and will continue to face difficult times in 2021.

Because of our experience navigating 2020, however, we are all much better equipped to work in this new, virtual space. And now that we know better, we can all do better. ▲

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Promoting the Joy of Mentoring

Proper mentoring can be mutually rewarding and enjoyable.

Although the value of mentoring should be self-evident, it is also clear that healthcare executives have a moral obligation to mentor the next generation of leaders. Doing so benefits both our successors and the organizations we serve.

In 2001, in response to the impressive inquiries being posed by Jeff Noblin, a young executive matched with me through ACHE's Leadership Mentoring Network, I asked if he would join me in co-authoring an article for *Healthcare Executive*, which would include my

answers to his questions (see sidebar on this page for a list of some of these insightful questions). In that article ("Mentoring Dialogue: Critical Questions and Answers," November/December 2002), we wrote that mentoring benefits mentees in three ways:

- The person has convenient access to a senior executive who has an interest in his or her career, and the relationship's objectives and expectations are jointly determined.
- Learning the intricacies of management through observations and analysis, followed by timely discussions, helps the junior executive become more sophisticated in addressing organizational issues.
- A young manager might feel hesitant to ask certain questions of a colleague or direct supervisor, but the mentee should feel less inhibited in raising issues with a mentor.

In retrospect, Noblin and other mentees would probably agree there are additional advantages to having an effective mentor. These include refining their professional values; developing stronger communication and leadership skills; honing other skills and expertise they need to succeed; establishing short- and long-term career goals; improving job satisfaction, performance and self-confidence; being exposed to new and different perspectives; expanding their professional network; being better prepared for interview questions; and identifying and addressing possible gaps in skills and

Questions Mentees Should Ask

The following questions appeared in the article "Mentoring Dialogue: Critical Questions and Answers" in the November/December 2002 issue of *Healthcare Executive*. They remain relevant questions for mentees to ask their mentors today:

- What specific skills should I be developing at this point in my career?
- If you were recruited to another institution, how would you evaluate the organization?
- What are the best steps to determine how a competing facility or health system is doing financially and operationally?
- Given the number of opportunities available in rural areas, what are the pros and cons of working in these settings?
- How will the role and influence of physicians be changing in the future?
- How should leadership respond when union organizing is initiated?
- If one or more individual board members begin to intercede by crossing the sometimes-ambiguous boundaries between governance and management, what should be done?
- Will physician influence in the healthcare setting become more prominent or diminish in the future?

knowledge. Of course, a good mentor will also share one of life's most critical lessons—the need to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

At the time the 2002 article was written, Noblin was a project manager at a health system in Albany, Ga. Not surprisingly, given his perceptive questions, he is now board certified in healthcare management as an ACHE Fellow and the CEO of Pleasant Valley Hospital in Point Pleasant, W.Va.

Benefits of Being a Mentor

It is unlikely that any effective executives have succeeded without having multiple mentors during their careers. Administrative residents and fellows are tutored by preceptors. Junior managers are mentored either formally or informally by their supervisors. Once becoming a senior executive, one should feel an innate instinct to reciprocate. It is rewarding—often in intangible ways.

Being a mentor is immensely satisfying and fulfilling. Based on my experience, early careerists who apply to ACHE's mentoring program (the Leadership Mentoring Network) or the National Center for Healthcare Leadership's Mentorship Program are unfailingly highly motivated and conscientious. Healthcare executives should also be strategic about how they approach mentoring and identify the programs that best fit their individual needs. The National Association of Health Service Executives and the National Association of Latino Executives have robust mentoring programs, as do many ACHE chapters. Every mentee has different

strengths and needs, making each interaction with a mentor, whether by email, phone, an online video platform or in person, stimulating and thought provoking. Being a mentor also helps one become a better listener.

It is unlikely that any effective executives have succeeded without having multiple mentors during their careers.

Yes, all senior executives have full schedules. But the time required is nominal, and the good feeling derived from contributing to the profession is immeasurable.

Both ACHE and NCHL ask mentors and mentees to complete a brief questionnaire soliciting feedback on the experience. However, mentors should frequently request informal confirmation from mentees that the experience is meeting their needs.

Mentees are encouraged to determine the interval between conversations. Typically, mentees and mentors meet monthly for an hour with the understanding that emails raising questions or giving updates are appropriate at any time. Though the duration of the relationship is usually six to 12 months, I always inform mentees that they can and should decide when it will conclude. Some associations have lasted for more than a year.

Fundamental to any relationship is mutual trust, thus building a strong

foundation for this trust should be a high priority. For example, the mentee must feel conversations will be kept confidential by the mentor, especially if the mentor is employed by the same organization.

Never Too Late to Consider Mentoring

Ideally, organizations that promote the joy of mentoring will benefit because eventually they will become more recognized as having nurturing cultures and enjoying higher rates of employee engagement and retention. In a June 8, 2021, *Harvard Business Review* article titled "You Need a Skills-Based Approach to Hiring and Developing Talent," LinkedIn CEO Ryan Roslansky noted a LinkedIn 2018 Workplace Learning Report that indicated 94% of employees admitted they would have stayed at a company longer if it had invested in their career.

Having a meaningful and ethical professional career is crucial for countless reasons, including ethical ones, so it is never too late to be reminded of Winston Churchill's astute observation: "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."▲

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Editor's note: Find out more about ACHE's Leadership Mentoring Network at ache.org/Mentoring.

asked her questions such as what we could have done differently the day before, her opinion about the way a meeting went, how she thought we could gain the buy-in of a certain physician or what the next step in getting from point A to point B might involve.

She had definite answers to these questions; the problem was that she had never been asked to project what the end result might look like and what it would take to get there. Simply articulating these answers to an objective source gave her the confidence to accept responsibility and ownership of her department, rather than defer to her director. This pay-it-forward approach required only a bit of extra effort on my part, but it made a world of difference to her performance.

Many times our early careerists can benefit from the coaching of someone from the outside looking in. Without my mentorship with Jennings, I am not sure I would have been aware of that need—or even willing to extend myself. But because I experienced the benefit of that relationship, I knew just how essential it can be to someone's success.

I have found that being a mentor has been incredibly rewarding because it:

- Reinforces the lessons I have learned over the years and keeps my own skills sharp
- Contributes to my colleagues' ability to come out of their shells or receive praise for a job well done when previously they had not been recognized

- Satisfies my need to contribute to the betterment of the individual and the organization

The skills I learned from Jennings, and in turn have shared with my colleagues, are those that are best learned as they are passed from leader to leader. The

importance of taking the time to work with an early careerist in your organization cannot be overemphasized. ▲

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Roger W. Nutter

Mentoring: A Win-Win Proposition

How to make the most out of these relationships.

Mentoring has been a hot topic in healthcare circles for several years, and ACHE has long promoted mentoring to its membership. These relationships can be a win-win scenario for all those involved.

For a mentor-mentee relationship to be successful, the mentee needs to take the initiative. The mentee must identify his or her needs and seek out a mentor with those skills and a willingness to share.

Following is an exploration of how people of all ages can become mentors by helping others learn and develop, and guidance for mentees on how to get the most out of these relationships. **Italicized** words reflect key action points and behaviors on which executives can focus to realize successful mentoring outcomes.

Expert Guidance

Mentoring occurs when someone with one skill, competency or talent **shares his or her knowledge in order to help another be better**

equipped in a job search or specific need for performance improvement. It is one individual readily and willingly sharing a specific skill or competency in the hopes of supporting the professional development of another. A key step toward a successful relationship is the mentor and mentee **fostering a positive relationship** at the onset. There is a great need for mentors in the field, and especially those who are **willing to engage in the journey of mentoring**.

Key requirements of mentors are that they have something to offer, recognize another's need, and can offer time and attention to supporting a willing mentee. Potential mentors can seek out mentees by finding someone in need, taking initiative in a **nonthreatening** way, and offering advice and time to enrich a mentee's professional skill development.

A mentor must be open to a relationship with a mentee who is less skilled in a certain area and willing to accept the expert guidance of the mentor. When a mentor coaches a mentee, any thoughts of questioning who is better or knows more should not be the focus. Mentoring is pretty simple when you look at it in these terms.

An Intentional, Structured Approach

As formal mentoring programs suggest, one must **be intentional** in his or her efforts. Experts suggest the mentee develop a mentoring plan that is **structured** and includes **regular meetings** and **consistent communication** with the mentor. Both mentor and mentee must be **committed** to the process; an informal approach will not be successful. It is suggested that both parties make a minimum six-week commitment before assessing the value of the mentoring effort.

For a mentor-mentee relationship to be successful, **the mentee needs to take the initiative**. The mentor is giving the time and expertise in sharing with the mentee. The mentee must **identify his or her needs** and seek out a mentor with those skills and a willingness to share. As a professional counselor might advise: The individual being counseled must desire change. The same goes for the mentee. **The mentee must need and want to change and learn from the mentor**. The mentee should enter a mentoring relationship with a well-developed plan regarding what he or she wants. Then he or she can connect with a mentor with like interests to begin a mentoring journey.

Be Prepared and Committed

How does a healthcare leader know if he or she is ready to be mentored? As a mentee, it's wise to think about **beginning the process with open and transparent communication with someone willing to serve as a mentor**. Executives seeking a mentor can consider those in their network who have mentored or know someone who has successfully mentored another

mentee or mentees. Next, they should isolate those potential mentors who have similar career paths and are known as experts, have a passion for helping others, and are willing to coach and guide others.

Next, the mentee should ***propose a formalized plan and timetable*** for when the mentee expects to achieve the goals outlined for the mentoring process. During the mentoring relationship, mentees should plan to report their progress to their mentors at regular intervals. This ***feedback*** about how mentees are doing on their professional journeys is invaluable to mentors. Mentors want to know they are making a difference to their mentees and if their time commitment is worthwhile and personally rewarding.

When providing feedback to mentors, mentees should be as specific as possible. They should let their mentors know about improvements they have identified in their professional lives as a result of the mentoring relationship and where they may still need help. At times mentees may feel like they are taking one step forward and two steps back; it may even feel like they are spinning their wheels. Don't give up. Instead, keep moving forward and remain committed to the mentoring program's success.

Beneficial at All Stages

Mentoring is valuable throughout the course of a leader's career; therefore, developing and maintaining one's professional network regularly is essential.

Before a job search or period of transition, it is good for leaders to have others within their professional

networks to whom they can turn. A community of friends and professional colleagues can be a valuable resource to encourage and support executives on their professional journeys. Leaders should be grateful and appreciative of their willingness to share in their growth and success. ▲

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Editor's note: For more information and resources on mentoring, please visit the Leadership Mentoring Network at **ache.org/Mentoring**.



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