



Ontario Nurses' Association

# How to be a Better Mentor

## Six Tips to Maintain and Sustain the Mentoring Relationship

- 1 Take time to establish rapport. Get to know each other.
- 2 Don't over-commit yourself – making promises you can't keep can be damaging.
- 3 Treat your partner as an equal.
- 4 Work with your partner to develop solutions and take responsibility for their actions. Remember, *empowerment* is an important part of the process.
- 5 Do not take responsibility for problems that are outside the limits of your involvement.
- 6 Most importantly – be yourself!

## The Ten **Be's** for Better Mentoring

- Be **patient** – building trust takes time.
- Be **approachable** – be relaxed, friendly and responsive to the needs and concerns of your mentee.
- Be **positive** – doing so can help to bolster sagging self confidence.
- Be **honest** – if you make a mistake, admit it.
- Be **reliable** – follow through on commitments made to your partner.
- Be **a good listener** and demonstrate that you respect your mentee's point of view.
- Be **realistic** – encourage goals that can be broken down into small, achievable targets.
- Be **non-judgmental** – try to understand and appreciate a different point of view. Don't apply your own standards or experiences as a template for the relationship. Remember to celebrate differences because sometimes 'it's the differences that make the difference.'
- Be **a sounding board** for your mentee's problems, ideas or plans for advancement.
- Be **an advisor** when discussing complex situations that may not have a single right answer or approach.

## A Good Mentor Helps a Mentee by:

- M**odeling ONA's vision by caring for members in a strong, united and respectful manner.
- E**xploring various options to challenges or problems and providing constructive feedback to the potential resolutions presented.
- N**ever forgetting to work with the mentee in establishing a network of supports.
- T**aking the risk of sharing their own experiences – both successes and failures – and by offering insights that only come with experience.
- O**ffering observations and identifying skills that can be developed to enhance advancement within the Union ranks.
- R**eferred the mentee to additional learning resources when appropriate (i.e. education sessions, guides, policies etc.).

# Tips for Giving Feedback

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* schedule a non-stressful time for giving feedback, when both of you are least likely to be rushed or called away.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* begin by asking for your mentee's perspective on strengths, areas needing more work, etc.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO NOT* overload your mentee with feedback.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* be aware of some possible solutions to problems beforehand.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* help your mentee turn negative feedback into constructive challenges.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* verify your mentee's understanding by asking them to summarize what was covered in the session and add your own points of emphasis.

\_\_\_\_\_ *DO* remember that successful feedback describes actions or behavior your mentee can do something about.

**REMEMBER:** a difficult conversation can make the difference between success and failure for a mentee. Care enough to hold the difficult conversation.

## Five Ways to Remain in Control of any Situation

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### Develop a Plan

Devise a plan before one is needed. Decisions made before a crisis occurs are more likely to be more rational than those made when on the receiving end of emotional outbursts.

### Use a Team Approach

Nearby assistance providing support and back up can allow you to remain calm.

### Use Positive Self-Talk

Just as saying, "I can't deal with this" might cause you to behave in one fashion, saying to oneself, "I know what to do" will cause another response.

### Recognize Personal Limits

Sometimes the best decision is to let someone else with more experience take over, if that's an option.

### Debrief

Be sure to debrief after a major incident. Doing so can relieve some of the stress and is also a good time to start planning for next time: what was done correctly, what could have been handled better, how the response could be improved if a similar situation occurs.

## Five De-Escalation Tips

1. Give the person your undivided attention.
2. Be non-judgmental.
3. Focus on the person's feelings, not just the facts.
4. Allow silence.
5. Use restatement to clarify messages.

### *The Mentee Mantra*

*I will take responsibility for visioning my goals.*

*I will be prepared to identify the actions I need to achieve my goals.*

*I will, in consultation with my mentor, schedule time to meet and have open dialogue on my progress.*

*I will be open to new ideas and ways of doing things.*

*I will ask for and accept feedback and when appropriate act on it.*

*I will ask for help when I need it.*

*I will take ownership for working to resolve my own problems.*