

**DOD Mentoring Resource Portal**

---

# **HOW TO BE A GREAT MENTOR**

Information for Mentors Portfolio

## HOW TO BE A GREAT MENTOR

### Purpose:

To provide Mentors with characteristics, behaviors and values that help develop and maintain successful mentoring relationships.

### Audience:

Mentors

### Context:

After matching selected Mentors to Mentees, HR (or the Mentoring Program Coordinator) should provide general guidelines to the mentors on how to have a successful mentoring relationship. This information should be accompanied by some sort of training.

### How to Use:

- **Step 1:** Customize the Mentoring Agreement Sample and make any adjustments to fit specific DOD Component/Agency needs.
- **Step 2:** Share the guide with the Mentors and Mentees and ask them to sign.
- **Step 3:** Keep a copy for the Mentoring Program records.

### Common Terms

The following are common terms associated with the DOD Mentoring Resource Portal:

*Mentor*, also known as Advisor, is a trusted counselor or guide who is involved in the development and support of one who is less experienced.

*Mentee*, also known as Mentee or Learner, is the more junior person being mentored.

*Mentoring Program Coordinator*, also known as Mentoring Program Manager, is responsible for the overall management of the Mentoring Program.

### Information Source Disclaimer

Most of the information on this mentoring resource was obtained from the following sources: [Headquarters, Department of Army, DCS, G-1 ARMY MENTORSHIP HANDBOOK](#). All content is provided for informational purposes only.

## 1.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF AN IDEAL MENTOR

### A Mentor:

- Coaches a Mentee on enhancing their personal and professional attributes, skills, and competencies.
- Passes along organizational information (structure, politics, personalities, traditions, and culture).
- Provides candid feedback to the Mentee about perceived strengths and weaknesses/developmental needs.
- Points out opportunities for the Mentee to develop and demonstrate capabilities.
- Advises the Mentee on how to deal with real or perceived road blocks.
- Serves as a sounding board.
- Encourages and motivates the Mentee.
- Builds the Mentee's sense of self-awareness, self-confidence, and adaptability.
- A Mentor helps a Mentee transition from the relatively narrow focus of technical work to the more complex field of leadership. In this process, the Mentor provides a role model for success.

## 2.0 WHAT DOES A MENTOR DO?

A Mentor is a leader who oversees and assists the personal, professional, and career development of another person, usually at a lower rank than the Mentor. Most simply stated, a Mentor helps a Mentee clarify personal, professional, and career goals; develop actions to improve attributes, skills, and competencies; and design and execute an Individual Development Action Plan (IDAP). The literature on mentoring varies as to the number and titles of roles a Mentor plays, but these generally fall into the following categories: Coach, Teacher, Motivator, Counselor, Guide, Advisor, and Role Model.

The following behavior-related characteristics typify ideal Mentors:

- **Supportive** - supports the needs and aspirations of the Mentee; encourages the Mentee to accept challenges and overcome difficulties.
- **Patient** - patient and willing to provide adequate time to interact with the Mentee.
- **Respected** - has earned the respect of people within the organization; others look to the Mentor as a positive role model.
- **People-Oriented** – genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others; knows how to effectively communicate and actively listen; able to resolve conflict and give appropriate feedback.
- **A Good Motivator** - inspires the Mentee to do better/stretch potential, through encouraging feedback and challenging work assignments.

- **Respectful of Others** - shows regard for the well-being of others; accepts the Mentee's minor flaws, just as the Mentee must accept minor flaws of the Mentor.
- **An Effective Teacher** - helps to manage and guide the Mentee's learning - this means actively trying to recognize and use teaching/learning opportunities (the opposite of a "sink or swim" approach).
- **Self-Confident** - appreciates the Mentee's developing strengths and abilities, without viewing them as a threat; enjoys being a part of a Mentee's growth and success.
- **An Achiever** - sets lofty career goals, continually evaluates them and strives to reach them, takes on more responsibility than is required, volunteers for more activities, and climbs the "career ladder" at a quick pace - and inspires the Mentee he or she Mentors with the same drive.

### 3.0 WHAT ARE MENTEES LOOKING FOR IN A MENTOR

When Mentees are asked what they want or expect from a Mentor, typical responses include:

- Encouragement
- Support
- Honesty
- Candid information and advice
- "Big picture" view
- Guidance
- Suggestions
- Honest appraisal of capabilities
- Help with "vision"
- Assistance in making "good" choices
- Information on opportunities available/possible help in defining and reaching goals
- Benefit of Mentor's experiences: what did and did not work
- An effort to really understand the Mentee's abilities and concerns
- Providing advice on requesting future assignments
- Availability, without interruptions
- Non-attribution, honest discussions about tough issues
- Assistance in formulating a cohesive plan
- Idea stimulation, insight to career

How Does a Mentor Know What a Mentee's Needs Are?

In addition to talking with the Mentee about what he or she perceives to be his or her strengths, weaknesses, and developmental needs, there are a number of different leadership assessment/self-awareness instruments that can be used to discover the Mentee's needs. Assessments provide feedback to the Mentee on what other people perceive to be his or her strengths, weaknesses, and developmental needs. The feedback comes from the Mentee's supervisor, peers, and subordinates. This type of information provides a useful "baseline data" to know where to focus developmental activities.

## 4.0 WHAT ARE SOME SIGNS OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP?

Some signs that a mentoring relationship is successful are:

- The Mentee is open to change and transition, to exploring possibilities, helping others, and learning from others.
- Both parties are inspired by the relationship and gain a great deal of satisfaction from it.
- There is a commitment to understanding and growing, and to confronting and working toward solutions to problems that may arise.
- The Mentee feels a bond or connection with the Mentor, experiencing the relationship as one of value in which mutual interest, respect, and straight forward communications are constants.
- The Mentee is comfortable going to the Mentor when counsel and support is desired.
- The Mentee takes responsibility for meeting his/her own needs in the relationship.
- The Mentor shows the Mentee new aspects of his or her potential, helping the Mentee learn about him or herself.
- The Mentor has established a comfortable environment for learning and discussion, and enjoys watching the Mentee grow.
- When it comes time to separate, the relationship is on positive footing and the Mentee regards the Mentor as a friend or confidant he or she can seek for advice in the future. Because of the relationship, the Mentee has increased self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-confidence.