



For you, your career, and your life

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Effective Leadership and Mentoring: Reaching and Teaching in New Ways

In the midst of a competitive, sink-or-swim culture, is there room for effective mentoring? What skills does it take to pass along your accumulated wisdom in a way that encourages, rather than discourages, your students?

“Mentoring relationships (mentorships) are dynamic, reciprocal, personal relationships in which a more experienced person (mentor) acts as a guide, role model, teacher and sponsor of a less experienced person (protégé),” state authors W. Brad Johnson, Ph.D. and Charles R. Ridley in *The Elements of Mentoring*.



“It is a mistake for anyone to think he has lived too long in his old, unsatisfactory ways to make the great change. If you switch on the light in a dark room, it makes no difference how long it was dark because the light will still shine. Be teachable. That is the whole secret.”

-Vernon Howard

Some amount of mentoring may be expected of you during your residency. It’s helpful to recognize those opportunities and the challenges they can present.

“In a teaching environment, there’s often a mindset among faculty that ‘things were much tougher when I was a med student,’” says Johnson, a professor of Psychology in the Department of Leadership, Ethics and Law at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. “Students are expected to demonstrate they have the right stuff before faculty is willing to take them seriously. Residents may be reluctant to invest time in first- and second-year students, knowing there’s a chance they won’t stay in the program.”

Often, mentoring doesn’t take place until late in a student’s career, Johnson says. “When we are certain that a student is going to be a star, he or she tends to get attention. The problem is that those are the ones who need mentoring the least.”

It takes courage to change patterns of behavior that have been practiced for a long time. Yet sometimes those patterns need to be changed. It’s okay to question behavior and teaching styles that create a negative learning environment.

When you find yourself in a difficult teaching situation, or you are looking for ways to get the most out of a mentoring role, your Resident Assistance Program is here for you. We’re your resource for improving your ability to excel as a physician and a leader.

Call us at 813-870-3344.

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Are You Mentor Material?

Not everyone is cut out to be a mentor. “It’s often assumed that if you can teach and do the research well, you can also mentor well,” Johnson notes. “Evidence shows that’s not true. There are many gifted doctors and researchers who are horrifically bad at managing relationships. They may lack good communication skills, empathy, or simply neglect their students because they’re always busy. Then there are always a few who are, frankly, abrasive and narcissistic. All of those factors can interfere with successful teaching and mentoring.”

Instructors need to be self-aware, confident and able to check their ego at the door, adds Alise Isbell, owner of Write Wise Communications, LLC. As an educator, corporate trainer

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Money Matters

Tips for 2010

Many people resolve every year to save more, spend less and pay off debt. That's a worthy resolution, yet it needs to be followed with a solid plan of action.

To help people looking to improve their financial situation, Money Management International (MMI), the nation's largest nonprofit credit and debt counseling and education agency, created a micro site called FinancialLiteracyMonth.com. It offers a step-by-step plan for improving your financial knowledge. This free resource can help you develop your financial New Year's resolutions and take the right steps toward financial wellness.

Make a commitment – It's time to be honest with yourself about your financial situation. Make a real commitment to improving your financial well-being and take the pledge to move into the black. It helps to share your goals with a friend or family member to remain accountable.

Assess your financial situation – Start your journey with a self-assessment and learn more about where your finances stand today. FinancialLiteracyMonth.com offers a simple ten-question quiz to assess your personal financial situation.

Clear out the clutter – Getting your financial house organized is a great way to begin the New Year and start on the path toward financial wellness. Visit www.IRS.gov to learn more about which documents are needed for tax purposes and which you can get rid of.

Money Management International is a non-profit community service organization that provides confidential financial guidance, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers. [www.moneymanagement.org]

Find additional free online resources, including articles, calculators, newsletters, e-seminars and more in the Muniz and Associates' Learning Center [www.munizandassociates.com].

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Effective Mentoring *continued*

and instructional designer, Isbell helps professionals in teaching and learning situations. "A good mentor will learn how to ask good questions, and will understand how adults learn."

Levels of Learning

Everyone's fallback when teaching is content, says Isbell. "Yet in the learning spectrum, knowledge is the lowest level of learning. When teaching, we want students to get much more from the learning experience by applying or innovating using what they know, not just memorizing it. It's like cooking. A great chef knows the ingredients, and then goes on to combine, create and enhance flavors through application (mixing ingredients) analysis (tasting), and synthesis (combining new and old ideas).

Rejecting Negative Patterns

Residents may need to "unlearn" certain behaviors in order to break out of negative patterns of instruction they experienced in med school. "No matter how they were taught, no one is at liberty to be abusive," says oncologist Stephen Iacoboni, MD. "It doesn't do them any good to be cruel and doesn't make anyone a better doctor."

"Most people will try to vent their negative experiences on others," says Isbell. "This is unproductive, because typically the situation is disconnected from the root cause. It ultimately can affect the patient. The patient doesn't understand that the resident just got humiliated by an instructor."

"There is no evidence to support the disengaged, demeaning approach—that if we are hard and kind of cruel, attrition will leave us only the best students," says Johnson. "That approach may actually cause us to lose some of more gifted students who may have a lower tolerance for negativity or are more fragile. With the right mentoring, these can be the students who end up excelling."

Using Your Role to Encourage

In any given rotation, medical residents may be tasked with doing more direct medical training than attending faculty, says Johnson. "Be on the lookout for promising students who would benefit from extra guidance and encouragement," he advises. "Really take time with those students. Residents are well positioned to be front line mentors and can really have an impact."

Resources

- *The Elements of Mentoring*, by W. Brad Johnson and Charles R. Ridley, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, (2004).
- *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*, by W. Brad Johnson, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., Mahwah, NJ (2007).
- *Power Mentoring: How Successful Mentors and Protégés Get the Most out of Their Relationships*, by Ellen Ensher and Susan Murphy, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA (2005).
- *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You* by Dr. Lois J. Zachary with Lory A. Fischler, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA (2009).
- Infoline, a training resource from the American Society for Training and Development, www.astd.org/content/publications/
- Bloom's Taxonomy (various sources). Resource for understanding human thinking skills and levels of learning.