

8 E's of EFFECTIVE MENTORING

by Gerry Monasterial



My ability and desire to write this article does not come from my skill as a mentor, it comes from the gift of having had several pivotal mentors in my own life. In fact, researching & writing this article highlighted my shortcomings as a mentor and magnified my gratitude as a mentee. I strongly agree with Tony Dungee that “The personal, one-on-one aspect of mentoring is something our society desperately needs.” Although I haven’t always taken the specific advice or sometimes even missed out on the overall theme & direction my mentors were trying to share, I can’t imagine where I would’ve ended up without their understanding, experience, & words of wisdom. It’s safe to say that where one mentor may have missed a specific mark, the cumulative investment from my mentors changed my life for the better.

*“The personal, one-on-one aspect of mentoring
is something our society desperately needs.”
–Tony Dungee*

There are 3 main purposes for this article. First, to emphasize the importance of mentorship for both mentors & mentees. If you don’t have a mentor, why not? Yes, you can learn from “experience”. You can also learn from books, YouTube, or even articles such as this; however, mentors will sometimes ask you tough questions that you won’t ask yourself while using other resources. Mentors can also pick up on blind spots that are just that for us, blind spots. If you have mentors, are you mentoring someone? If not, why not? You have perspectives & experiences that can make someone’s life better, or even make them better. Mentorship doesn’t have to be a formal process, it’s just 2 people making time for “give & take”. It can be done over coffee or zoom. It can be in an office or a porch. It can be weekly or quarterly. It just takes a little bit of time & purpose.

Second, this article is meant to highlight some of the similarities, but more importantly, the subtle differences between coaching & mentoring. There are many overlapping similarities such as the need for one on one conversations, the need for feedback, regular touchpoints, & an overarching purpose of development. The differences; however, are sometimes not as distinctly defined for the mentorship to be as effective as possible.

Here are some specific differences to consider:

COACHING VS. MENTORING

Immediate Feedback Loop ✕ *Delayed* Feedback Loop

Focused on *Answers* ✕ Focused on *Questions*

Includes *Expectations* ✕ Includes *Expectancy*

What *Now?* ✕ What *Next?*

Usually *In-Role* ✕ Usually *Next Role*

Transactional ✕ *Transitional*

Task-oriented ✕ *Mind-oriented*

Directive ✕ *Supportive/Explorative*

Foster Environment of
being *Accountable* ✕ Foster Environment of
being *Able*

Finally, this article is meant to emphasize specific aspects that optimize the mentor/mentee relationship. As I mentioned earlier, I point these out from the perspective of having multiple mentors throughout my life and seeing what good looks like. As in anything worth doing in life, it's worth doing well. I hope you find the 8 E's of Effective Mentoring helpful as a mentor and as a mentee.

BE EXCELLENT

Be Excellent

- In the areas you advise in
- In the area of learning

Most resources on mentorship use the word expert in the requirements. This, unfortunately, causes most to avoid playing this important role in the lives of others instead of leaning in. I'm not a fan of the word expert because it implies finality to someone's learning. If you're an expert, is there really any room for growth? If not, I hope to never be an expert. I do, however, desire to be excellent. Excellence is greatness, not in comparison to others, but in comparison to our lesser selves. Again, if mentoring is only reserved for the elite few, it leaves the masses without the many benefits that mentoring provides. To be an effective mentor, you don't need to be an expert or elite, but you should strive to be excellent.

As a mentee, be hungry, driven, & curious. Implement a 360-degree learning method where your mentor(s) are only a part of your learning resource. This allows for the relationship to become "equitable" in the future where you can validate and/or even challenge the thoughts of your mentor(s). There is powerful potential in two people striving for excellence toward the same goal of growth.

BE ENGAGING

Be Engaging

- Includes dialogue (Not a psychologist & not a preacher)

Impactful engagement depends on both the mentor & the mentee. As a child in an abusive home, I had my fair share of sitting across from a plethora of psychologists & heard enough one-sided "How does that make you feel?" for a lifetime. I began learning to give brief one-sentence answers and concluding with, "so, how do you feel about how I feel?" That might be why I was on the receiving end of new psychologists

every few months. On the contrary, I've also sat in the pews of churches and listened to many sermons. And although many have positively contributed to every aspect of my life, I have never left a single sermon without wanting to stand up to say, "Pardon me, pastor, before you continue, I have a couple clarifying questions." I'm just sure this would've been welcomed by the preacher and the congregation. However, this type of back & forth engagement is exactly what should be welcomed between mentors and mentees. Both should walk away seeking to understand and feeling understood. Both should be seeking and sharing experiences. As I was once told, the relationship isn't 50/50. It should be 100/100.

BE ENCOURAGING

Be Encouraging

- Being positive
- Being challenging

There are very few things in life more beneficial to the soul than to hear words of encouragement. Most people are their own worst critics and focus on their shortcomings rather than their value. A mentor can and should find this value & validate it. Everyone is a genius in something. That something should be called out, validated, & celebrated.

On the flip side of the same coin, a mentor should challenge. There is untapped potential in everyone and without encouragement from others, many of us might underachieve. Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best, "Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can."

BE EMPOWERING

Be Empowering

- Sharing tools, insight, & experiences to develop you to the next level

- Introductions to others who can help

In the context of this mentoring list, 'empowering' is the next level to 'encouraging'. While encouraging will provide belief in the 'what & why', empowering will provide evidence of the 'how'. It's the difference between, "You can do this" and "Let's do this." Have you ever left a meeting passionate about the goals & the rewards just to realize very quickly that you have no idea how to achieve those goals? Introductions to tools, knowledge and other people that can help us provide the important stepping stones we all need to keep moving forward when the path we're taking is new to us.

BE EXPLORATIVE

Be Explorative

- Helps stretch someone's thinking (past the day-to-day)

One of my favorite questions in meaningful conversations is "have you thought about..."

It can be used to either challenge a current mindset or to stretch it. Other such questions include "what would happen if...", "have you considered...", "is it possible to...". These questions layout an open canvas that allows the mentee to paint the actual picture. Being explorative is one of the main differences between coaching and mentoring. It opens up the 'what next' possibilities. It emphasizes the mindset on what could be instead of what is.

BE EQUITABLE

Be Equitable

- Being a mentor should also mean that you have a mentor

- Mentee becomes someone that can reciprocate rather than stay one-sided

Equity is associated with the value in investments. Something of value must have transferability. Could you imagine buying a house that is guaranteed never to appreciate and you were told you could never sell under any circumstance? Thanks, but no thanks, that's a hard pass. By nature, something of value derives that value from relative appreciation & transferability or utility. The economy of personal & professional development works the same way. In fact, mentorship is an investment. It's an investment into one another. A person focused on growth should always value both, the input and output of that growth, the ultimate investment.

BE EXPECTANT

Be Expectant

- Both sides should be eager, anticipant, watchful, and alert.
- Difference between "having expectations" versus "being expectant"

Have you heard the saying, "we find what we're looking for"? If we're looking for a fight, we'll probably find one. If we're looking for something to complain about, we can find a plethora. What if we spent more of our time looking for learning opportunities, teaching opportunities, and growth opportunities? Whether it be circumstances or people we're dealing with, everything and everyone has the potential of helping us grow, either through hardships or simply a broader perspective.

In addition, the difference between having expectations versus expectancy cannot be over-emphasized. While the coaching relationship is defined by expectations, the mentoring relationship should focus on expectancy and only have fundamental expectations such as authenticity, honesty, and a commitment to growth. Think of the contrast between a marriage that is full of expectations (which will usually result in many being unmet) versus a marriage filled with expectancy. Expectations focus on the external performance of the other person while expectancy focuses on our own internal mindset.

BE EMPATHETIC

Be Empathetic

- Empathy in its purest form is kindness. Listening & understanding without judgment.
- This is what brings life to the other components.

Being empathic in a mentoring relationship is what fuels the other 7 E's. Without empathy, mentoring becomes cheap advice. And if you're like most, cheap advice is not only useless, it can be damaging. To be clear, however, empathy is not necessarily sympathy. Empathy is the willingness & ability to understand another person's perspectives and feelings. Unlike sympathy, it doesn't require us to share or agree with those perspectives or feelings. This is where mentorship, when performed with empathy, can make both people grow. Can you imagine only doing life with people that agree with every single one of your thoughts? Although this might create a life of shallow bliss, it doesn't leave much room for constructive growth. We need tension in circumstances and in relationships in order to evolve. The empathy component of mentorship is what creates this healthy and useful tension.

As stated in the beginning, mentoring relationships are crucial for both individuals and highly necessary in today's society. Having mentors in our lives is in essence, having our own advisory board, while having mentees ensures that we pay it forward and not waste such an important investment. It is also essential to note the subtle differences between mentoring and coaching. Finally, the 8 E's give us a plan to follow that focuses our effort in the most significant aspects of effective mentoring relationships. As Paul J. Meyer stated, "Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort."

Mentorship Challenge Questions:

Who are your mentors & why?

Who are you mentoring?

In your mentoring relationships, are you spending more time in coaching conversations or mentoring

conversations? How can you optimize your mentoring conversations?

As a mentor, which E(s) do you need to improve?

As a mentee, which E(s) do you need to improve?
