

## LE MENTORAT : PARTENARIAT MAGIQUE

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### RÉSUMÉ :

L'auteure explore l'histoire et la définition du mentorat. Un mentor peut être une personne prestigieuse occupant un poste supérieur ou bien un collègue ou formateur averti. Ces personnes peuvent inciter le changement tout en guidant, en conseillant, et en facilitant le développement des personnes qui les entourent.

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## MENTORING: THE MAGIC PARTNERSHIP

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### ABSTRACT

The author explores the history and definition of mentoring. Mentors may be persons of rank, achievement and prestige, or they may be a knowledgeable colleague or teacher. They serve as a catalyst to transform as they instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the development of others.

### INTRODUCTION

Mentors may be persons of rank, achievement and prestige, or they may be a knowledgeable colleague or teacher. They serve as a catalyst to transform as they instruct, counsel, guide and facilitate the development of others. Mentors not only help mentees learn about their field, they also learn from the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentoring is a humanistic, confidential and social relationship between people in which one individual functions as a sponsor, guide and role model. To be effective mentors should possess patience, enthusiasm, knowledge, a sense of humor and respect. Mentoring is the process that awakens our confidence in our abilities and opens doors that lead to personal or professional growth. It goes beyond teaching knowledge or skills or the mere passing on of information. It is a complex nurturing, developing and empowering relationship that requires mutual learning, sharing and growing. Mentoring is the linchpin of recruitment and retention. People come in and go out of our lives all the time. Some of these relationships help us grow and through them we learn the personal and professional lessons of life. These special relationships create a transformation as individuals and help us grow, open doors to new capabilities, and create new ways of being in the world around us. These relationships constitute the reciprocal, interactive process of learning we call mentoring. The process helps us connect so that we can reach our goals and grow together.

### MENTORING IS NOT NEW

The history of mentoring reveals that the goddess of wisdom, Athena, disguised herself as Mentor and was left in charge of Odysseus' household for ten years during his odyssey. Mentor tutored Telemachus (Odysseus' son) in his father's absence so that he would become a successful ruler. In the United States there is a rich history of nursing leaders who knew the

value of mentoring. Amy Armor Smith authored the first perioperative nursing text in which she shared her views. Dr Connie Vance, a more current leader, often writes of the importance of sharing the one's experiential wisdom to guide the next generation of nurses. In the UK, Edna Doreen Ayris, affectionately known as Daisy, is an example of one who spoke not only of the value of passing along knowledge but also demonstrated the worth of mentoring by her actions.

So what is a mentor? We could use words like: guide, mediator, encourager, coach or tutor. However, a noun for further consideration could be 'exemplar'. The word means a story. We all have stories that demonstrate our passion for perioperative nursing. Sharing those stories with each other and with young people who might be interested in joining our profession could be just the thing that sparks a young mind to seek the rewards of theatre nursing. Author Chip Bell states that, '*Mentoring is an honor. Except love, there is no greater gift one can give another than the gift of growth*'. The framework of mentoring is much like the nursing process: there must be an awareness of the need; openness to the opportunity to share; action to accomplish the sharing of information and expertise. There must be a mentor and a mentee to make the relationship work. In order for the relationship to be productive it must be based on mutual respect. History is full of famous pairs that have experienced this reciprocal relationship: Socrates and Plato, Annie Sullivan and Helen Keller, and Sir Henry Herbert and Florence Nightingale to name three, have all shared relationships that went beyond that of teacher and pupil. Current-day movies also portray the value of the mentoring relationship. How does one characterize this very special state? Words like non-competitive, nurturing and reciprocity come to mind. However, the real characterization can be summed up with the fact that this relationship is a gift exchange. Never before has having wisdom been more critical and acquiring wisdom been more challenging.

### WHAT DOES MENTORING REALLY MEAN?

The mentor/mentee journey involves active

listening. Most people think of listening as a passive state. Perhaps the term should be expanded to mean mindful listening: that of giving your undivided attention. In our busy lives we are often thinking of what time we need to collect our children from school, or how many jobs we must do after we leave our workplace. But mindful listening means devoting your attention to the speaker, rather than thinking of your next remark. Mentoring involves utilizing the skills of coaching and often confrontation techniques, as well as creative methods of resolving conflict.

If one were to place a cost on recruitment and retention, then administration may be more inclined to place a higher value on mentoring. For example, on a recent visit to an infection control nurse, a hidden cost was discovered that had not been previously considered. The nurse explained that management was 'giving her grief' about the increased cost of having to administer vaccinations to new employees. It was hypothesized that those costs would not be quite so high were a higher value placed on keeping qualified nurses rather than the constant need to keep training new ones.

If a random sample of people were asked to list famous athletes, film stars or Nobel prize winners, what would be the outcome? Most people could name a few, but perhaps not many. However, if that same sample were also asked to think of:

- a teacher, or someone who made a difference in their life;
- a colleague, or someone who taught them something; or
- a friend, or someone who helped them in a time of need;

it is probable that most of the sample could immediately bring a special person to mind.

Using phrases like: '*I'm just a nurse*', '*Nurses eat their young*', '*We are our own worst enemy*', and '*I wouldn't encourage anyone in my family to become a nurse*' are discouraging at best. Negative imagery of nursing will not attract anyone to the profession. Instead, we need to remember those exemplars and stories of the passion we feel for nursing and share them with others.

## MENTORING (cont.)

### THE 'GOOSE' MODEL

It could be argued that by participating in the mentoring process, an individual could be seen as a 'silly goose'. However, lessons learned from geese could be applied in this situation.

- Geese fly in a 'V' formation because it provides an increase of 71% in uplift: People with a common sense of direction and purpose accomplish more. When a goose falls out of formation, it feels the drag and resistance of flying alone: We need the help of others and they need our help at times. We should accept that help and give it generously;
- When the lead goose tires, it rotates to the back and lets another take a turn: If we share the challenges of leadership, we will not get tired out. We need to celebrate each other's uniqueness;
- When a goose gets sick or wounded, two geese drop out to stay with it until it dies or can rejoin the group: If we have the sense of geese we will stick by each other in difficult times or support each other in teaching others; and
- Interestingly, geese honk encouragement to each other: Encouragement is a powerful tool in the mentoring toolbox.

The effects of this mentoring process can be very positive. For the mentee there can be an increase in the access to information, self-esteem, job satisfaction and professionalism. The positive outcomes can also lessen stress, worry, absenteeism and waste. Moreover, it is possible for a mentee to have more than one mentor simultaneously. As an example, the author cites a cardiothoracic surgeon named Dr. Page Acree who shared his expertise generously and often.

### MENTORING IN PRACTICE

The terms role model, preceptor and mentor are often used synonymously. However, they are rather like layers of an onion or a mosquito stat, hemostat and Crile. Each role adds a layer or adds depth to the previous one, so that the mentoring role is the most complex. Everything that is done in the presence of others may have an impact on the future. Remember: 'a moment lasts but a

second, while a memory lasts forever'. Sometimes the way we behave can have a lasting impression on another. It is up to the individual whether that will be a positive or negative experience.

### QUALITIES AND ROLES

There can be no greater compliment to a person than to have another ask them to be a mentor. A good mentee or protégé should be open and honest, as well as able to take advice and accept constructive criticism in the spirit in which it is offered. In this relationship, the mentee would share goals and seek input. The mentor should keep all discussions in confidence.

To become a mentor, watch for someone you think you'd like to help nurture along the journey. Try to identify a good personality match. The mentor should be trustworthy and keep in confidence the ideals, goals and dreams that are shared with the mentee. The good mentor would not head straight for the nurses' lounge and say, 'Do you know what Sally told me today!' A mentor enjoys the success of the mentee and looks for ways for the mentee to succeed. He or she encourages the mentee to set high but realistic expectations and offers opportunities to rise to a challenge. Mentors have never-ending compassion, crystal-clear communication and a sincere joy in helping others along the way. Think about a candle lighting another candle: as the first candle lights the other, for a moment, there is a flash where both are brighter. So, in the mentoring relationship, the flame of both the mentor and mentee will be brighter while the relationship exists. A candle loses nothing by lighting another.

There are many roles that the mentor plays in this association. As a counselor, the mentor provides guidance and advice, assists in planning strategies and establishes a support system in stressful times. As a communicator they listen and interpret feedback. As a coach or advisor they clarify goals and share open, honest feedback. Advice that could be helpful to remember for the potential mentor: 'You are not eligible to change my view until you first show me that you understand my view'. As a referral agent or broker the mentor advocates, intervenes

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## Vital Acute Care Hospital in the GTA seeks Nursing Professionals to join its Surgical Program Team



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## MENTORING (cont.)

and arranges opportunities for growth in the mentee. The following eight pieces of advice should be heeded by the potential mentor:

**Listen mindfully;**

**Affection:** the kind we must all have for one another;

**Laughter:** humour can lighten the burden of everyday activity – post a joke or cartoon;

**Written note:** leave a post-it on someone's locker telling them what a good job they did;

**Compliment:** a sincere one, for people know when you mean them;

**Favour:** where you do something for someone and don't expect anything in return;

**Solitude:** remember that at one time you were connected to someone. Take the time to reflect on those with whom you need to connect; and

**Cheerful disposition:** you don't have to be Pollyanna, but if you count your blessings frequently, your attitude will be positive.

### THE NEED TO QUESTION

While the relationship may last a lifetime, there could be obstacles along the way. If there is jealousy, oppressive control, loss of objectivity, or exploitation, either the mentor or the mentee may lose heart. If there is fear of failure or over-dependence, expectations may prove disappointing. When the obstacles are identified or the relationship becomes unhealthy, both parties must be willing to recognize the limits of the relationship. Every nurse must examine himself or herself and ask if they have the qualities to be a mentor. It is our responsibility to be a role model and to foster professionalism in the next generation. The following principles of training may be employed:

present meaningful information;

use repetition;

present one concept at a time; and

use feedback and frequent summaries.

Nursing is back up to first place career choice in the Gallup poll. AfPP's John Beesley told the author recently that UK nurses are being valued more than ever before. While there are days

when nurses may feel like they've been worn down and stepped on, they should remember that they do make a difference. What they know and are willing to share may make the difference in someone's life.

### BENEFITS FOR THE FUTURE

Mentoring is the linchpin of recruitment and retention where everyone is guaranteed to benefit. The mentee builds self-esteem and learns diverse skills. Within organizations that employ a clinical ladder or advancement opportunity one can achieve professional advancement. From the mentor's point of view they can sharpen their skills and achieve a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. They can also experience career rejuvenation. Healthcare systems' outcomes are numerous because the system will foster leadership development, teamwork and retention.

There is a dynamic interaction between the gardener and the garden. These two distinct living entities have a unique relationship. The garden has a dependency on the gardener, and the gardener must consider the unique properties of each plant as well as the forces of nature. The following are some tips for the gardener: don't over-water or over-feed, don't crowd: prune and weed, allow to grow at own pace, appreciate garden and each plant, and share with others. These same tips could be applied to the mentoring relationship. In your garden remember to plant three rows of peas: *peace of mind, peace of heart, peace of soul*. Plant four rows of squash: *squash gossip, squash indifference, squash grumbling, and squash selfishness*. Plant four rows of lettuce: *lettuce be faithful, lettuce be kind, lettuce be obedient, and lettuce love one another*. No garden is complete without turnips: *turnip for meetings, turnip for service, turnip to help one another. With a bit of 'thyme' you will reap what you sow*.

Our future is in the faces of the young and new to our profession. Mentoring is a magic partnership that awakens our confidence in our abilities. It goes beyond teaching knowledge or skills or the mere passing on of information. It is a complex nurturing, developing and empowering relationship that requires mutual sharing, growing and learning.

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