

THE ETIQUETTE OF MENTORING DO'S AND DON'T'S

There is an unspoken code of behaviour that exists in mentoring relationships. Unfortunately, since it's unspoken, both participants in the mentoring relationship, unknowingly and unintentionally, may end up doing the 'wrong thing.' All individuals come to a new relationship with different styles of communication, different points of view and different expectations. Working in a new relationship with someone very different from you is a skill. As with any skill, the more you practice, the easier it gets. At the very minimum, relationship skills required for mentoring include, showing kindness, practicing patience and flexibility, and conveying a sense of appreciation for the individual's accomplishments. Following are some additional suggestions for mentors:

DO

- Respect your mentee's time as much as your own
- Be explicit about the 'norms' for your meetings and your own needs and limits (e.g., time, style of interfacing, etc.)
- Always ask if you can make a suggestion or offer feedback
- Tell your mentee that you don't expect them to follow all of your suggestions
- Expect your mentee to move toward his/her goals; not yours
- Express appreciation to any help your mentee gives you
- Keep the relationship on a professional basis
- Recognise and work through conflicts in a respectful way; invite discussions of differences
- Keep the door open for your mentee to contact you in the future—if that is your wish

DON'T

- Assume that your schedule always has priority
- Make your mentee guess or learn by trial and error, about the ground rules for your meetings
- Automatically give advice or criticism
- Assume your advice will be followed
- Expect a clone of yourself
- Take your mentee for granted or assume the she/he doesn't need positive reinforcement
- Move too quickly into a personal friendship, if at all
- Avoid discussion of inappropriate subjects and forcing your solutions in conflicts
- End the relationship on a sour note