

Create a safe environment

Create an environment where your team can feel free to be honest. The key to creating such an environment is to openly acknowledge your mutual struggles. By disclosing something personal about yourself—even your failures – you take the initial step toward creating trust. Your own honesty and vulnerability will help your team members open up and share. Emphasize that the information shared between you will remain in the strictest confidence.

Listen without judgment

While sharing your own experiences is vital to the mentoring relationship, you must also learn when to set your thoughts aside and focus on what the team members have to say. Learn to listen without an agenda by resisting the temptation to make a point, teach a lesson, or offer some caution. When you abandon trying to come up with all the answers, your team members will begin to feel heard and valued.

Focus on learning

As a mentor, you can gain knowledge from your team and the mentoring experience by bringing a learning attitude to the relationship. Let your team members know that you may not have all the answers and that you can learn from each other. If your team sees you as a fellow learner, there is a greater potential for a partnership. Find out what your team members can teach you that you would like to learn. Or together, investigate an area you both would like to learn more about.

Agree on objectives, not approaches

A true mentoring mind set focuses on the learning objective, not the process. Your role as a mentor is to open up possibilities for your team members, not to provide proven techniques for a given list of problems. It is important to adopt a style in which you offer options to your team as a way to encourage them to try new approaches. Telling your team member what to do or how to do it can deprive them of a valuable learning opportunity.

Appreciate your differences

You and your team members have entered the mentoring relationship with different experiences and different points of view. Recognize those differences while respecting your common needs and objectives. And remember, the more differences between you and your team members, the more learning that occurs for you both.

By establishing a deeper mentoring relationship, you expand the depth and breadth of your team members' growth as well as your own. To sustain the energy of your

relationship, continue to share your experiences, remain interested in each other, and celebrate one another's successes.