

# Lesson 9

## Mentoring



### Key Terms

bias  
mentee  
mentoring  
socioeconomic  
stereotypes

### What You Will Learn to Do

- Outline a plan to mentor another cadet

### Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Treat self and others with respect

### Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of a mentor
- Identify seven ways mentors can gain the trust and respect of subordinates and/or mentees
- Describe the four functions of a mentoring program
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

## Introduction

This lesson presents a mentoring program designed to help you explore new interests in helping others, further develop your personal skills, and stay excited about school. Mentoring activities will center around building trust and developing positive self-esteem through sharing and working together with your subordinates, peers, or other teenagers and children in one-to-one relationships. The mentoring role is a major commitment on your part. In addition to comprehending the concept of self-identity, you must also understand the skills necessary in a mentoring relationship and work to acquire those skills. Finally, you must have an awareness of culturally diverse issues which can affect you, your mentoring program, and your community.

A dynamic **mentoring** program in your cadet battalion or school is one that encourages the development of caring partnerships. Every mentoring program requires the presence of positive role models to support high school mentors as they build positive interpersonal relations both in and out of school-based experiences. In this lesson, we will briefly look at how mentoring identifies with Army JROTC and your position as a cadet leader and mentor. Then, we will examine in detail how mentoring pertains to your development as a high school student entrusted with the responsibility to help others.

### Key Note Term

**mentoring** – a sustained one-to-one relationship which promotes human development by regular, joint participation in structured activities

### The Starfish

As an old man walked the beach at dawn, he noticed a young man ahead picking up starfish and flinging them into the sea. Finally catching up to the youth, he asked the young man why he was doing this. The answer was that the stranded starfish would die if left until the morning sun.

“But the beach goes on for miles and there are millions of starfish,” countered the old man. “How can your effort make a difference?”

The young man looked at the starfish in his hand and then threw it to safety in the waves. “It makes a difference to that one,” he said.

## Mentoring in Relationship to Army JROTC Leadership

The concept of mentoring includes the roles of the teacher, role model, coach, and counselor. Mentors, however, are more than teachers and coaches; they are trusted guides and counselors. As a mentor, *you are not a trained counselor*. Leaders as mentors are responsible for molding and developing individuals into proficient, cohesive teams.

Genuine respect is a key element in any mentoring program. Subordinates must be able to respect their leaders if they want to trust them as their guides and counselors. To obtain this trust and respect, leaders as mentors must

- Set a good example; role modeling and setting examples for subordinates to follow are extremely important.
- Commit themselves to their subordinates and be fully committed to the complete development of those who are in need of some form of structured guidance in their lives.
- Possess the commitment of guardians and the duty of tutors.
- Have a personal stake in the positive and long-term development of those they are trying to help.
- Be sensitive to the feelings of their subordinates, yet be responsible for training them intensively.
- Develop the capacity to delegate authority in order to watch subordinates learn hard, valuable lessons through trial and error.
- Provide adequate and timely feedback to ensure the success of their subordinates' development process.

## *Mentoring: What's It All About?*

Entering into a mentoring relationship can be rewarding and exciting. It even can be a little scary. There are responsibilities involved that require maturity, compassion, and sometimes tough decisions. In this new adventure you are about to begin as a mentor, use your head, trust your instincts, listen to your heart, and it will be the experience of a lifetime. A mentor is someone who

- Acts like an older brother or sister
- Generates respect and trust
- Helps **mentees** expect success
- Teaches by example and direction
- Admits to making mistakes, facing difficult tasks, and “not being perfect”
- Provides a positive role model
- Has something positive to contribute
- Participates in activities designed to motivate mentees
- Listens without judging
- Does fun things
- Tutors and helps to build good study habits
- Helps mentees develop a desire to attend/stay in school and improve school attendance
- Inspires others to set achievable goals

## *Mentoring Functions*

There are four mentoring functions that can guide you through this new adventure: listening, coaching, educating, and role modeling.

### *Key Note Term*

**mentee** – one who receives advice, especially officially or professionally

### **Listening**

The most important function of the mentor may be to listen (see Figure 4.9.1). Many young people today do not have anyone at home who will take the time to listen to them. When there is someone with whom to “talk out” the situation, however, people are better able to sort out their difficulties and arrive at their own solutions.

### **Coaching**

Coaches give praise for a job well done, encouragement when the going gets tough, and constructive criticism when they need to make changes (see Figure 4.9.2). It is always easier to deal with the negatives when you know there are some positives.

### **Educating**

Being a tutor is another responsibility of a mentor. Sometimes it may seem easier to do something for another person; however, that person will benefit more if he/she does it for themselves with only guidance from the mentor. One way to give a person control is to teach them the skills to take care of themselves (see Figure 4.9.3).

### **Role Modeling**

Mentors can help their mentees develop values, standards, and goals by allowing themselves to be seen as “real people” and by sharing personal beliefs and values. Mentors can also introduce their mentees to others whom they hold in high regard (see Figure 4.9.4).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors**

The roles of mentors will vary with every situation. The following list is not all inclusive, but it gives you an idea of the different kinds of roles that mentors perform in typical mentoring programs.



*Figure 4.9.1: Take the time to listen.*  
Courtesy of Paul Barton/Corbis Images.



*Figure 4.9.2: A little encouragement can go a long way.*  
Courtesy of Jose Luis Pelaez, Inc./Corbis Images..



Figure 4.9.3: Share your knowledge.

Courtesy of John Henley/Corbis Images.



Figure 4.9.4: Meeting a hero can change your life.

Courtesy of Mannie Garcia/Reuters/Corbis Images.

- Be aware of the impact that culture, **socioeconomic** status, experiences, etc., have on how the mentee sees and processes information. Become comfortable with the fact that the mentee may be different from you and may approach evaluating, perceiving, acting, and behaving differently than you do.
- Be careful to respect the mentee's orientation and not to impose your values, assumptions, perceptions, and **biases** on the mentee. Be aware of your own attitudes, beliefs, and feelings and how these filters may bias your judgment.
- Help your mentee to accomplish tasks, but be careful not to hold preconceived ideas about what that person can or cannot do. Recognize limitations but do not attempt to replace the mentee's personal efforts. Always remember that you are there to *assist*, not to *do* the task.
- Acquire specific knowledge about the mentee with whom you work. If you find out that he/she has major challenges at home, school, and/or place of employment, be careful not to ask too many questions about any uncomfortable situations. If you encounter a situation that you do not feel comfortable handling, seek help or guidance from your instructors.
- Teach the mentee to respond to verbal rewards. Do not give gifts as a means of positive recognition and do not become emotionally attached. If the relationship becomes personal to the degree you are not able to be objective, withdraw and refer the mentee to another mentor. If a mentee makes a habit of bringing you gifts, discourage that habit. Always read any notes given to you by the mentee. Sometimes because of their learning style, mentees may not be able to vocalize their challenge but they are able to put it in writing. Never respond back in writing. If the notes are of a personal nature, discourage that habit. One or two positive words like "Congratulations!" or "Well done!" may be appropriate.

Although your roles as a mentor may change with the situation, your responsibilities will remain constant throughout the mentoring program. The following list describes specifically what the program expects of you. We mentioned at the beginning of this lesson that being a mentor is not an easy task. As you read through these responsibilities, identify those areas where you must increase your self-awareness and/or develop the necessary attributes of self-esteem to be an effective

### Key Note Terms

**socioeconomic** – involving a combination of social and economic factors

**bias** – a mental leaning; partiality, prejudice, bent

mentor. Accomplishing these responsibilities will require a high degree of self-identity and maturity.

- **Help your mentee to make assessments about behavior, thoughts, and actions as that individual tries new activities. Help the mentee see the benefits of trying and taking risks with new behaviors. Give support when necessary.**
- **Be clear, concise, direct, and consistent with feedback.**
- **Help the mentee generate a variety of responses or alternatives to situations.**
- **Do not make promises you cannot keep. Do not use the word *promise* to your mentee (as you will be taking responsibility). Make “I” statements to your mentee of what you are willing to do. For example, “I will help you find out the easiest and most effective way for you to study.”**
- **Coordinate all planned activities with your instructors, the cooperating agency, other mentors, and the mentee.**
- **Prepare for and complete the tasks you agreed to do.**
- **Follow the rules of your battalion and school while working with the mentee.**
- **Make arrangements to contact the mentee’s guardians, parents, teachers, and so on for permission to take that person on special activities.**
- **If you cannot perform a task that you agreed to do at the prescribed time, reschedule it for another time.**
- **Do not break confidentiality by sharing the mentee’s concerns with others. However, confidentiality should always be overridden if the situation calls for it. A competent mentor maintains confidences and does not discuss personal interviews with other cadets or people. *If the challenge is beyond your scope, contact a qualified person.* It is critical that you use concrete procedures in serious cases. *If a life-threatening situation arises:***
  - **Inform your mentee that you will notify a competent adviser because you *care*.**
  - **Encourage the mentee to go with you to the adviser to explain the situation. If the mentee refuses, insist that he or she go. Explain that you are not only concerned, but that the seriousness of the situation requires the mentee to seek counsel. If the mentee still refuses, clearly state, “I will seek advice alone from (state the name of the adviser).”**

### Note

If the challenge is beyond your scope, contact a qualified person. If a life-threatening situation arises, notify an adviser immediately.

## Using Effective Communication Skills

Participating in a mentoring relationship is not the time to misunderstand the use of a word, a gesture, or an emotion. Mentors must thoroughly understand the importance of using effective communication. The proper application of listening, nonverbal communication (such as body language), and verbal communication skills—as well as “I” messages—are critical to a successful mentoring program.

Any relationship must begin with communication in one form or another. The quality of that relationship often depends on the quality of the communication. Much of the communication we use in our daily lives involves some negative habits. Imagine how you feel when someone nags, reminds, criticizes, threatens, lectures, advises, or ridicules you. Many times the person doing this to you is not aware of the feelings these actions cause. Whether we are aware of these habits or not, they promise to lessen the quality of our relationships.

Study the following communication jammers and identify the ones you use most often. Then, try to determine why they are not helpful in maintaining satisfying relationships.

- **Ordering, commanding.** The phrases *You must, You will, or You have to* are a great way to create a power struggle, implying that you are superior. They are usually successful in producing anger and resistance. A favorite counter to these phrases is “Make me.” Therefore, you will find it is more helpful to ask for cooperation with your mentee and to give choices, such as: “I would appreciate . . .,” “It’s your choice; you can either . . . or . . .,” or “Would you rather . . . or . . .?”
- **Warning, threatening.** The phrases *If you do that, you’ll be sorry or You’d better not do that if you know what’s good for you* invite testing, threats, and hostility. Do not use them unless you want to fight with your mentee. The consequences and action methods are more effective. Simply state what you plan to do and then do it. There are no further reminders: just act, don’t talk.
- **Moralizing, preaching.** When you use the “shoulds,” “oughts,” or “musts,” the mentee may hear only the control part and may resist without considering the reasons or consequences. It is much more effective to listen and to problem-solve; for example, “Have you thought what might happen . . .?” or “What do you think might happen if . . .?”
- **Proposing alternatives, giving solutions.** Use “Now, if it were up to me . . .” or “What you should do is . . .” when you propose alternatives and help the mentee to find solutions, both important elements of mentoring responsibilities. However, in circumstances similar to counseling someone using the directive approach, there are several mentee behaviors for which you should be on the lookout. They are as follows:
  - Often, the person resists your proposals
  - You do not want the mentee dependent on you; instead, you want the individual to think for herself/himself
  - If the mentee takes your suggestion and it does not work, that person may hold you responsible
- **Lecturing, giving logical arguments.** When trying to prove your point with the facts, such as “You’re wrong here” or “Yes, but . . .,” people are often well aware of the facts and resent being told them again and again. Trying to persuade with facts is usually not effective. Instead, helping your mentee to explore the goals, alternatives, and consequences of a proposed action gives you much more influence in guiding the person.
- **The put-downs—judging, ridiculing, blaming, name-calling, sarcasm, shaming.** Some people use phrases like *How stupid, You’re just lazy, It’s all your fault, That’s an immature point of view, or Okay, big shot* to motivate others by making them feel inadequate or inferior. However, these phrases normally succeed only in putting people on the defensive as they try to protect their self-image. The common responses are to return criticism, seal off feelings, or shut down communications and cooperation. It is important to separate the behavior you disagree with from the person’s character and worth. It is harder to be specific about what

you want without dragging the person's dignity through the mud, but far more effective.

- **Playing psychologist, analyzing and diagnosing.** When using the phrases “The problem with you is . . .” or “You’re just jealous,” you can embarrass, frustrate, or threaten people because you are indicating that you know what their motives are or have figured them out. This technique is another way to shut off communication and guarantee the person will not share difficult matters with you. Besides, if your interpretation is wrong, the person will most likely become angry.
- **Consoling.** “It’s not really that bad,” “You’ll feel better in the morning,” or “Don’t worry, it’ll all work out” are phrases a consoling person uses when trying to keep from getting involved. These phrases treat the other person’s feelings lightly. Helping the person to explore alternatives and listening are more helpful. Sometimes, people are not looking to solve a problem; instead, they are complaining just to let off steam. Then, when you offer a solution, you could complicate the issue, anger them, or make the situation larger than what it really is.

### Listening Skills

As mentors, you must understand the value of listening. Listen carefully for “feeling words” such as sad, happy, embarrassed, frustrated, alone, hurt, angry, bored, jealous, confused, and so on. Realize that everyone has feelings and they need to have ways in which to express them.

To ensure proper and effective communications with your mentee, you must first be able to identify what and how you feel while listening to your mentee. Then, learn what the mentee actually felt. These feelings may be the same or they may be different. For example, the mentee may be feeling depression, but you may feel frustration when hearing these words because you do not know how to help.

Additionally, understand some of the **stereotypes** related to listening. It is only natural for people to form different opinions about something. Oftentimes, these individual opinions will disagree with the opinions of others. It is your job as a mentor to know how feelings, stereotypes, and opinions reflect upon your mentee’s values, attitudes, and behavior. Be able to identify these characteristics in a mentoring relationship and determine how you can use them to become a better mentor.

### Nonverbal Communication Skills

Know the importance of nonverbal communications and the impact it has on others. Observe how your mentee listens; then, uses body language (see Figure 4.9.5) and eye contact. Remember, how your mentee says something is frequently more important than what he or she says. The behavior that this person displays sometimes expresses more meaning than words.

### “I” Messages

“I” messages are statements, beginning with “I,” that tell how you feel about a certain situation. They are the most appropriate way to express your feelings whenever a conflict arises. They show concern in a calm and respectful way. Plus, they focus the communication on your feelings and expectations rather than those of the other person, in this case your mentee.

#### Key Note Term

**stereotypes** – an oversimplified opinion, belief, or viewpoint; a person, group, event, or issue considered to typify or conform to an unvarying pattern or manner; lacking any individuality; a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude, or uncritical judgment





*Figure 4.9.5: Body language can tell you a lot about how people feel about themselves.*

Courtesy of Corbis Images.

Whenever we focus attention on the other person's feelings and expectations, whether by accident or on purpose, the communication often takes on a blaming and accusatory tone. "I" messages express what the conflict is to the other person and how this conflict affects you.

Think about the last time you were in an argument. Did you use "I" messages? It sounds easy, but it takes a lot of practice. A typical "I" message has three parts, shown in parentheses, which can come in any order.

*"I feel (state feeling) when you (describe specific behavior) because (state how it affects you)."*

To reinforce your understanding of "I" messages, review both examples below. The "you" messages are first, followed by the appropriate "I" messages.

**Example #1:**

"You promised you'd never tell anyone. I knew I shouldn't have told you. You can't ever keep a secret."

"I feel hurt when you tell something I told you in secret because I didn't want anyone else to know."

**Example #2:**

"You're never organized or dependable. You can't be counted on."

"I get really upset whenever you back out on something, especially at the last minute because it leaves me stuck holding the bag."

## Exploring Alternatives

What would you do if your mentee came to you with a difficult situation and wanted you to help? In most situations, your job is not to find the solution for the mentee but to help that person develop solutions to handle the issue. When you assist someone in exploring alternatives, it is always helpful to follow a pattern similar to the one below. The key words in this exploring alternatives model are *brainstorm*, *assist*, *choose*, *commitment*, and *follow-up*.

- **What is the difficulty and what are the alternatives?** The mentor and mentee should *brainstorm* as many ways of handling the situation as possible.
- **What are the consequences of each alternative?** The mentor should *assist* the mentee in evaluating the pros and cons for each alternative.
- **What is the best alternative?** The mentee must *choose* what he/she thinks is best.
- **When is the best time to put the plan into action?** The mentee, under close coordination and supervision of the mentor, must make a *commitment* to begin using the best alternative as soon as the situation permits.
- **Is there evaluation?** Yes! The mentor must set a time to *follow up* and evaluate how the mentee is accomplishing the plan.

When helping your mentee to choose a solution, especially if that person seems stuck, you can offer suggestions as other possible alternatives. However, do not put the person down for not accepting your ideas and do not take his or her responsibility away to solve the issue. After all, if your efforts fail, that person may hold you responsible or may not do as you suggested. Keep the mentoring relationship a learning process to help with future problems, as needed.

### Note

Remember, developing positive mentoring relationships is not about *winning* but *solving* the conflict.

### A Hundred Years

A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or how spotless it was, or the kind of car I drove. But the world may be different because I was important in the life of another.

### Note

Commitment is easy during the good times; *it is during the rough times when mentors are truly tested*. And sometimes, the best thing a mentor can do for a mentee is *just be there*.

## Conclusion

As a mentor, there are many difficult situations that you may encounter in mentoring relationships: prejudices, handling stress, coping with loss, and understanding the issues of troubled families. These topics are vitally important to your job because they are becoming increasingly commonplace in today's lifestyles. If you have questions regarding any of these issues, discuss them with your instructors.

Summarized below are the qualities of a successful mentor. Follow these qualities carefully, display maturity, show compassion, use your head, trust your instincts, listen to your heart, and you will make your mentoring opportunity the experience of a lifetime.

- **Know your job; be flexible and open-minded.**
- **Know and use communication skills effectively, such as the**
  - **Ability to listen and accept different points of view.**
  - **Ability to empathize with another person's struggle.**
- **Apply effective leadership skills such as decision making, problem solving, and goal setting; possess the ability to see solutions, opportunities, and barriers.**
- **Be personally committed to working with people; be available and supportive.**
- **Show respect for individuals; display honesty, patience, trust, and a warm and caring attitude.**

There are many important things to accomplish in life, and helping someone to help themselves is one of them. Remember, it sometimes takes a while to get something done right. What is important, however, is to keep trying and to *never give up*.

## Lesson Review

1. **What is a mentor?**
2. **What are the four functions of mentoring?**
3. **List three responsibilities of a mentor.**
4. **What do you do if the problem is beyond your scope or a life-threatening situation?**