

# 10 Tips on How to be a Great EOC Mentor by Associate Director, Kimberly Chu



Good mentoring relationships can be richly rewarding, not only for the person being mentored, but for the mentor too. Mentors can, among other things, provide exceptional learning experiences for their mentees and, in doing so, expand their mentee's awareness, insight, and perspective. *What does it mean to be a mentor?* Being a mentor means being a trusted advisor. It means making yourself available to support and advise someone when they need it, delivering that support in a way that makes sense to them, and always keeping that person's best interests in mind. Want to be a great mentor? Here are 10 things you need to do:

## 1. Approach each mentorship differently

While you can do your best to categorize a mentor/mentee relationship, everyone is unique. When you first start out, it's important to take the time to assess your own style and readiness, and think about what kind of commitment you can and want to make.

## 2. Willingness to share skills, knowledge, and expertise

A good mentor is willing to teach what he/she knows and accept the mentee where they currently are in their professional development. Good mentors can remember what it was like just starting out in the field. The mentor does not take the mentoring relationship lightly and understands that good mentoring requires time and commitment and is willing to continually share information and their ongoing support with the mentee.

## 3. Take a genuine interest in your mentee as a person

A mentor/mentee relationship is a very personal one. You can give mediocre advice without really knowing a person, but to stand out as an amazing mentor, you are really going to have to get to know your mentee on a personal level.

You probably have some of their career-oriented questions down – what is their dream job, goals for their current job/school, and so on and so forth. But what about the stuff that makes them...them? Getting to know your mentee on a deeper level will help you build a strong relationship, and it will also help you understand who they are as a person.

## 4. Become an active listener

This is easier said than done: It means making a conscious effort to really, truly pay attention to what your mentee is saying, instead of thinking about what you are going to say next. You might worry that you need to come up with something helpful right away, when in fact the best thing you can do for your mentee is to listen closely to what they are saying, ask open questions to dig deeper, and act as a sounding board.

## 5. Know when to wait before giving advice

When you are mentoring someone, you might feel pressured to give him or her advice straight away. However, not all feedback is helpful feedback, and giving unhelpful or unwelcome feedback can be detrimental to your relationship. An amazing mentor knows when to hit pause during a conversation. If you do not have the right information, experience or emotional state to react to a situation properly, hit pause. This will give you a chance to get more information, talk to your resources, and come back with a clear and valuable response.

## 6. Improve your emotional intelligence

Being emotionally intelligent is a big part of being an amazing mentor. Any time you become a mentor for someone, you will find yourself getting to know their unique personality, their wants and

needs, the experiences that have shaped them, and how they deal with different situations. The best mentors know how to unlock this information by asking the right questions, reading their mentee's body language, being open-minded, and even acknowledging and controlling their own emotions.

## 7. Do not assume anything about your mentee – ASK

It is easy to fall into stereotypes or not see a situation from another person's perspective. But great mentors recognize that it is their responsibility to break through common assumptions by asking questions and digging deeper.

## 8. Seek out opportunities related to skills your mentee wants to develop

Great mentors look for situations and some even create situations where their mentees can get involved to learn some of the skills they have been hoping to learn. It does not matter how much or how little experience you have in your mentee's current or desired job or industry – you can still give them helpful resources to succeed. It can be anything from connecting them with someone with experience in their dream job or industry, or sending them a website or information they might find beneficial. Take note of the areas in which your mentee wants to grow, and always be looking for opportunities to point them in the right direction.

## 9. Celebrate their achievements

Many times students often look for or call upon a mentor to help them with tough situations; many mentorship conversations revolve around the negative stuff. When you take time to highlight and even celebrate your mentee's successes and achievements, you are not just balancing out the mood of those conversations – you are also building your mentee's confidence, reinforcing good behavior, and keeping them focused and motivated.

## 10. Lead by example

Last, but certainly not least, be a positive role model. Your mentee can learn a whole lot from you by simply observing how you behave. They will pick up information about your ethics, values, and standards, styles, beliefs, attitudes, and methods. In turn, they are likely to follow your lead, adapt your approach to their own style, and build confidence through their affiliation with you. As a mentor, you need to be keenly aware of your own behavior.

At the end of the day, being a great mentor takes practice and patience. The more you work with your mentee, the more you will learn about them, their communication style, how they process feedback, how they go about pursuing their goals. At the same time, you will learn a lot about yourself, how effectively you can explain ideas in a way others can understand, how well you are able to control your emotions, whether you are able to provide a vision that motivates others, and so on. I guarantee that being a mentor will likely be as a rewarding experience for you as it will be for your mentees.