

A 'SIMPLE' And 'NICE' Mentor Who Enables His Mentee To 'GROW'

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Abstract: A Mentor should be 'SIMPLE' (S-Engage in Self-development, I- show genuine Interest in the mentee, M-be motivated, P-Have a Pleasant Personality, L- Listening (Active) and Feedback skills, E- Subject expertise, encourage new ideas; and 'NICE'(N-Networking ability, I- Avoid conflict of interest, C- Challenge, character, credibility, E-Espouse a vision for the future, devote extra time and effort, endowed with emotional intelligence).A model for mentoring would be the 'FROW' Model – G- Set Goals, R- check reality, O-Explore options, W- chart the way forward.

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Introduction: An English physiologist labored at Liverpool in the pre-Flexnerian era. He had already coined the term 'synapse' by then. Legend has it that he was so 'simple' and 'nice' that he attentively listened to every student who spoke to him. This might seem passé, but he eventually went on to win the Nobel Prize for his work on spinal reflexes. He then trained a Kiwi for seven years; the latter also won a Nobel. The Englishman was Sir Charles Scott Sherrington, and the Kiwi was John Carew Eccles. The former a 'Mentor', and the latter, a 'Mentee' or a protégé.

Legend has it that the word 'mentor' has its origins in Greek mythology. In the Odyssey, Odysseus, before embarking on the Trojan War, entrusted the well-being of his son Telemachus, to his trusted friend Mentor.

Mentoring is now considered to be a vital cog in the entire spectrum of medical education. One classic definition of mentor is someone of advanced rank or experience, who guides, teaches and develops a novice¹.

A Mentor should be:

Simple: S – Engage in Self Development by participating in Faculty Development Programmes which will help him develop for his role as a mentor. This could include a workshop on Mentoring, communication and feedback. Thus, a mentor should be self-driven.

I - A mentor should have genuine 'interest' in the well-being of his mentee.

M- Role Model: He should demonstrate exemplary behavior encompassing various professional attributes like accountability to his patients, adherence to excellence, respect for his peers. He should demonstrate compassion for his patients.

P- Pleasant Personality: In the 'ocean' of personality types (openness, conscientiousness, extrovert, agreeable, neurotic), a mentor should ride the waves, yet be pleasant.

L – Listening (Active) and Feedback Skills: A mentor should be able to actively listen. Thus, he should be able to Receive, Appreciate, Summarize and Ask (RASA).

He should be able to give effective feedback such that it focuses on the 'task' rather than on the person.

E- Subject Expertise, Encourage new ideas: In the academic sphere, a mentor should ideally be a subject expert.

Apart from providing support, he should challenge the mentee and encourage him to come up with new ideas.

'NICE'

N – Networking Ability: A mentor should be actively involved with a couple of organizations related to his subject expertise. He may be a part of a community of practice. This will endow him networking abilities, which his mentee can then harness.

I – Avoid Conflict of Interest: Genuine interest in the well-being of his protégé, and a feeling of security

about his senior position, will enable the mentor to avoid any conflict of interest.

C- Challenge, Character and Credibility: A mentor should challenge a mentee to come up with his own solutions. Thus, rather being a 'fixer', he should empower the mentee for independence in the future.

An individual with a sound character possesses fairness, integrity, honesty, respect for human dignity and an adherence to excellence. Such an individual become credible.

E- Espouse a vision for the future; Devote Extra time and Effort, Endowed

With Emotional Intelligence

The mentor should be able to chart a vision for the mentee's future. The great Australian leg spinner, Bill O'Reilly was part of Don Bradman's 1948 'invincibles'. After his retirement, Richie Benaut took his place.

Once, after seeing the latter in action, Tiger (as Bill O'Reilly was fondly called),took Benaut for lunch and charted a 3 year course for him so that he could reach the level of Tiger ! Thus, extra time and effort may need to be devoted².

Table 1. 'Simple' and 'Nice'

S – Engage in Self Development through participation in faculty development activities
I – Demonstrates genuine Interest in the Mentee
M- Motivated
P- Pleasant personality
L-Listening skills
E- Subject Expertise and Encourage new ideas
N- Networking ability
I – Avoid conflict of Interest
C- Character and Credibility
E-Encourage New Ideas

Table 2: Emotional Intelligence³The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at work

Components	Definition	Hallmarks
Self-awareness	The ability to understand one's own moods, emotions and drives, as well as their effect on others	Self-confidence Realistic self-assessment Self deprecating sense of humour
Self-regulation	The ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and actions The propensity to suspend judgement- to think before acting	Trustworthiness and integrity Comfort with ambiguity Openness to change
Motivation	A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status A propensity to pursue goals with energy or persistence	Strong drive to achieve Optimism even in the face of failure Organizational commitment
Empathy	The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people Skill in treating people based on their emotional reactions	Expertise in building and retaining talent Cross-cultural sensitivity Services to clients and customers
Social skill	Propensity in managing relationships and building networks An ability to find common ground and build rapport	Effectiveness in leading change Persuasiveness Expertise in building and leading teams

While it is ideal for a mentor to possess these qualities, good listening and feedback skills, challenging a mentee by raising the bar and providing him with a future vision, are the bedrock of a 'good' mentor.

The 'GROW' Model of Mentoring: Performance, learning and enjoyment are inextricably intertwined
- Sir John Whitmore

The Bill O' Reilly- Richie Benaut collaboration employed this model.

Tiger set a Goal, pointed to the Reality, may have discussed about Options or alternative strategies, and expertly charted a Way forward.

Table 2: The ' GROW' Model⁴

<p>G- Goal setting for the session as well as for the short and long term</p> <p>R- Reality checking to explore the current situation</p> <p>O-Options or alternative strategies, and course of action</p> <p>W-What is to be done, when and by whom and the will to do it</p>
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A)Goals should be

SMART, PURE and CLEAR

Specific, Measurable, Agreed Upon, Realistic, Time Bound Positively Stated, Understood, Relevant, Ethical Challenging, Legal, Environmentally Sound, Appropriate and Realistic.

Setting a goal:

- What do you want ?(in the short-term or long-term)
- How will you know when you get there ?
- What are the benefits to you ? Will you lose anything ? If yes, how ?
- How much time do you think you will take to achieve your goal ?

b) Reality Checking: This step involves determining one's assessment of the current situation with regards to the goal.

Questions for reality checking may be :

1. What is the current situation / reality ?
2. What steps have you taken to achieve your current ?

If no steps have been taken, what prevents you from taking these steps ?

c) Options or Alternative Strategies



A mentee may harbor beliefs which are an obstacle to his/her progress in the organization or career. Identifying the distortions in the mentee's thinking with regards to this aspect is central to unlocking the solution. Also, the mentor may come up with some innovative ideas or solutions.

4) Way Forward: Once the solution has been identified, the mentor should chart a path towards the goal.

Pointing the way forward :

- What will you do ?
- When will you do it ?
- What are the likely obstacles ?
- What support do you need ?^[4]

In pointing the way forward, the mentor's subject expertise, networking skills and emotional intelligence will play a vital role.

Thus, this article highlights the essential characteristics required of a mentor. It also describes a model for mentoring. It should be emphasized that putting theory into practice would require tailoring one's skills to the context, and employing wisdom for the same.

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