

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Getting Started

The beginning of any new relationship can be awkward. We don't know what to expect, although we certainly have expectations or a set of preconceived notions. We have ideas about the other person, either from stereotypes or from things that we've heard about people with similar circumstances, or we have ideas from our own experiences about how relationships work.

As you are preparing to enter the mentor/mentee relationship, you will probably be both apprehensive and excited about the adventure to follow. Here are some things to keep in mind as you begin your journey.

1. **You will both be nervous.** You will each feel as though you are expected to perform in a particular way or to achieve a particular goal or set of goals. You are each likely to feel as though you are a title, mentor or mentee, rather than a person. You will also be wondering what the other person expects from you.
2. **You are both valuable to the relationship.** Although it is true that both participants will be working to help the mentee reach his or her goal, the mentee and the mentor are on equal footing within the relationship. Together, you have a much wider perspective and a greater set of resources with which to work than either of you had on your own.
3. **You do not yet trust each other.** Trust comes from a sense of comfort with another person, and comfort comes from repeated experience. Trust is developed over time, once we have a good idea of who the other person is, what he or she values, how he or she responds in particular situations and how he or she feels about us.
4. **Keep a positive outlook.** This relationship is new for both of you. There will be all kinds of new experiences that arise because you are in this new relationship. If you look for the positive aspects of situations as they occur, you will keep yourself and your partner moving forward.