

# Mentoring – A New Way of Work

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As we re-organize our current volunteer structure, mentoring will become a way of work for all leadership team positions. Good mentoring relationships can be richly rewarding, not only for the mentee, but for the mentor as well. Through research, we have identified mentorship relationships as a key element to help prevent new volunteers from ‘falling through the cracks’ and becoming frustrated with their new position.

Here are some helpful tips on being a good mentor:

## **1. Be accessible:**

Taking on the role of a mentor requires focus and significant energy and time. By leveraging mobile phones, social media, e-mail and the occasional lunchtime chat sessions, your communication stream will be in great shape. Try to think of innovative ways and places to communicate with your mentees. How about a “coffee and chat” session at a local coffee shop? Perhaps an informal newsletter to all the volunteers you are mentoring, keeping them up-to-date on the latest developments? A Facebook page where you can share information, photos, documents, etc., is also a great way to keep in touch. The more you communicate, the better informed—and happy!—new volunteers will be!

## **2. Be a positive role model:**

Good mentors are respected by their mentees. A mentee can learn a lot from their mentor simply by watching how their mentor behaves in any particular situation. Good mentors will also look out for experiences, or even create situations in which their mentees can become involved to learn new things. Look for ways to involve new volunteers in helping out with your position of responsibility.

## **3. Be yourself:**

Share your experiences and your failures. The more you are yourself, the stronger a relationship you will build with your mentee. Answer any questions as openly and truthfully as you can, always trying to be as positive as possible.

## **4. Be genuinely interested in your mentee as an individual:**

A mentoring relationship is often very important to the mentee, so, as a mentor, you need to get to know your mentee personally, about their hopes and dreams, so you can help them in a way that meets their personal best interest. Find out why they decided to become a Girl Scout volunteer and what they hope to accomplish in their position. Be objective, be patient and listen to your mentee.

## **5. Share your experiences and insights:**

Choose stories and experiences that you feel are appropriate and helpful, but do so in a neutral way. Be open to sharing your mistakes and failures too, as these are often where our biggest lessons are learned. It will also help your mentee be aware that challenges will arise, and the way you dealt with the situation might also help them gain insight about how to build resilience. However, try to refrain from bashing the organization, even if

you don't agree with everything that is going on. After all, you are trying to provide a positive experience for a new volunteer!

#### **6. Share your network:**

Introduce your mentee to your network, as it may yield to increased learning opportunities, other professional contacts, job projects, additional mentors and much more. The more involved new volunteers become, and the more positive experiences they accumulate, the more confident they will be in their own volunteer roles.

#### **7. Act as a sounding board:**

Mentees benefit greatly from the opportunity of having a good mentor listen to them. Allow them to explore their thoughts and ideas openly with you. This will often help them unravel their thinking and gain insights about a situation as they share their concerns with you.

#### **8. Provide a fresh perspective:**

A good mentor will often provide their mentee with a fresh perspective on an issue. A good mentor will often have the clarity of distance from an issue or problem that's needed to provide objective feedback to their mentee.

#### **9. Provide helpful feedback and acknowledge achievements:**

Not all feedback is helpful. A good mentor knows this and will deliver feedback in a way that will help their mentee gain insight to further develop specific qualities or skills. Always ask for permission to give feedback before doing so. Ask your mentee questions and empower them to work through their issues so they can learn to trust their own judgment. Additionally, help build your mentee's confidence by celebrating and acknowledging their achievements.

#### **10. Have fun:**

Being a mentor is an exhilarating experience. Mentors often learn a great deal about themselves through the course of a mentorship relationship. Remember to make the experience a fun and engaging one for the mentee and for yourself!

These tips should help you become a great mentor as you move into your new leadership team position with the Girl Scouts of Black Diamond. Always remember, new volunteers are looking up to you for support and guidance. Be the best role model—and mentor—you can be!

*(Some tips were borrowed from the United Way of Calgary.)*