

Qualities of a Peer Mentor

A Peer Mentor *IS* a...

- Coach
- Guide
- Companion
- Supporter
- Advisor
- Role model
- Person to talk to
- Resource broker

A Peer Mentor *IS NOT* a/n...

- Best friend
- Sibling/Parent
- Parole officer
- Social worker
- Therapist/Psychologist
- Source of money
- Solution to all problems
- All-knowing authority

Personal commitment to be involved with another person for an extended time. Mentors have a genuine desire to be part of other people's lives, to help them with tough decisions and to see them become the best they can be. They have to be invested over the long haul to be there long enough to make a difference.

Respect for individuals, their abilities and their right to make their own choices in life. Mentors should not approach the mentee with the attitude that their own ways are better. Your mentee is not your protégé! Mentors who convey a sense of respect and equal dignity in the relationship win the trust of their mentees.

Ability to listen and to accept different points of view. Most people can find someone who will give advice or express opinions. It's much harder to find someone who will suspend her own judgment and really listen. Mentors often help simply by listening, asking thoughtful questions and giving mentees an opportunity to explore their own thoughts.

Ability to empathize with another person's struggles. Effective mentors can feel *with* people without feeling pity *for* them. Even without having had the same life experiences, they can empathize with their mentee's feelings and personal problems.

Ability to see solutions and opportunities as well as barriers. Effective mentors balance a realistic respect for the real and serious problems faced by their mentees with optimism about finding equally realistic solutions. They are able to make sense of a seeming jumble of issues and point out sensible alternatives.

Flexibility and openness. Effective mentors recognize that relationships take time to develop and that communication is a two-way street. They are willing to take time to get to know their mentees, to learn new things that are important to their mentees (music, styles, philosophies, etc.), and even to be changed by their relationship.

Awareness of when to reach out. Effective mentors embrace the notion that asking for help is sometimes the best step in supporting their mentees. They are able to make sense of situations that prompt assistance such as the inability to adjust to a college environment, situations in which your mentee is at-risk to themselves or others, or dramatic changes in behavior.