

# Mentorship is Changing

Historically, mentorship signified a younger person learning from an older and wiser individual. This is no longer the case. Mentorship can be formal, informal, come from someone older or younger and be within or outside of your profession.

## Types of Mentorship

### One-on-One

Traditionally a more experienced individual mentors someone who is newer to the profession. An individual can have many mentors covering different aspects of their lives.

*Benefits:* Opportunity for deep dive into a particular growth area. Relationship can grow over time and become valuable, strong, long-lasting and lead to career opportunities.

*Challenges:* The perspective is limited to one person's experience. Matching programs are difficult as personal connections tend to happen more organically.

### Group

A less formal style that occurs in groups such as a study club or pod. The group may be peer-learning focused or an experienced member may serve as the primary mentor for the group.

*Benefits:* Diversity of thought and perspective, social engagement, can create a group with common interests; cover a variety of topics, ideal way to leverage dental society connections.

*Challenges:* Maintaining group will require organization and leadership. Potential for interest to diminish or to lose focus of group. May have a cost involved.

### Rapid Response

This type of mentorship is based on speed and typically occurs in an online forum.

*Benefits:* Fast. Multiple responses and viewpoints. Can support others as well as elevate personal brand. Enhances overall knowledge broadly.

*Challenges:* Information may not be reliable (though it could be!). Responses may not be supportive, can lose focus. Online communication lacks non-verbal cues and context.

### Reverse

A more experienced individual benefits from a less experienced and often younger colleague.

*Benefits:* Both individuals experience professional and personal growth.

*Challenges:* Perspectives may be different going into a reverse mentorship situation.

## Getting Started

### 1. Decide what you want to learn from a mentorship relationship

- Are you looking for someone to guide you through a particular situation, such as a transition to a new dental practice or applying to residency, or is it more general advice? And are you looking for guidance that is clinical in nature, practice or leadership or a combination? You may want to consider forming a mentorship team – several mentors all with different roles and some may not be in dentistry. Knowing what you’re looking for will help you decide who you want to connect with and contact.

### 2. Write down a list of people who could be potential mentors

- These individuals may be in your current networking circle or someone who you’d like to meet. You’ll want to seek out professionals *you* respect and admire– and that can be different for everyone. They may be just a few years ahead of you or someone who has had a unique career path. If you can’t think of people, write down the qualities you admire.

### 3. Start reaching out

- This is the hard part. But it’s probably not as hard as you think. Most people want to help!

### 4. Find ways to spend time together

- Texting or phone calls are a great way to connect with your mentors. While many people prefer face-to-face meetings, they can be challenging to coordinate. Define what you’d like and be sure to ask your mentor about boundaries they may have.

### 5. Things may change

- It’s okay if your goals or life changes and you or your mentor want to move on. You can talk to them and say how much you’ve valued this time and you’re ready for a change. Your mentor may have similar life changes. You may be tempted to just let this happen organically – which it might. But clearly communicating with your mentor will likely be appreciated. Leave things in a good place.

## Where to Find a Mentor

- State or local dental society (look online or contact the staff or volunteer leadership)
- Specialty dental societies, ethnic dental associations or other professional groups
- New Dentist Committees – most state dental societies have them!
- Local community events or meetings
- ADA app (use the mentorship feature)
- Philanthropic events or experiences that align with your values

## Mentorship Worksheet

*I want mentors to help me with....*

*I would be interested in being a mentor to help others with...*

*List of qualities I'm looking for in my mentors*

*List of potential mentors*

*My expectations of my mentors*

*My boundaries*

*What I will do next*

**Be a mentor!** You can give back to others by being a mentor. You don't have to have it all figured out to offer your learnings to another individual.

## Communication Examples

Initial e-mail/text example:

*Hi, I met you at the ABC Dental Event last week and really enjoyed learning about XYZ. Would you be open to talking more in the future? I'm looking at (going into teaching, buying a practice, adopting a puppy...) and would like to learn more about your experience. Let me know what you think and we can find time to talk on the phone for a few minutes.*

When talking for the first time:

*Thank you for talking with me! Is now still a good time? (It's ok to make small talk – weather / sports are usually good topics!) I appreciated learning more about your story when we met. As I mentioned, I'm xxx and am interested in xxx and I realized that I could really use some guidance on a regular basis from someone who has your experience. Would you be willing to work with me as a mentor? (After they agree to be your mentor, you can talk more about your career goals and what you want to gain from a mentor. This is also a good time to ask about their career path/experiences.)*

Defining mutual expectations:

*This has been a great conversation. What do you think about talking once a month or so on the phone? Maybe for 45 minutes? Would that work? Should we schedule that now?*

*And what do you think about texting? Could I text you if I have a quick question? And I know I tend to respond right away unless I'm with a patient – what about you? What is your texting style?*

*Is there anything else I should know? Do you have a particular day or time that is reserved for family or personal time? I am NOT a morning person so I tend to be a night owl but I know some people are the opposite.*

Ending the call:

*Thank you so much. I will talk with you on X date (or however you decided to move forward).*

*Post-Conversation*

Text to confirm time/date of next conversation. Text to say thank you for talking and looking forward to talking again.

This handout is provided by the ADA New Dentist Committee.  
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