

Keys to Good Mentoring

Mentoring is easier than you think. Yes, you'll face complex mentee stories that will break your heart and tempt you to say, "I can't fix this. I don't know enough. I'm no counselor!" The truth is, you're not a counselor and you can't fix it. Nor should you even try. **So what are the keys to making mentoring easier and more effective?**

Finding your P.L.A.C.E. as a mentor

- Pray:** **Don't underestimate the amazing strength gained through this simple act.** God's Spirit comes alongside us in prayer (Romans 8:26). **Good mentors do the same for their mentees.** It also lets them learn from you how they too can relate to God as friend (Exodus 33:11; John 15:15).
- Listen:** It doesn't sound like much, but listening is crucial because **most people long to be heard.** They want someone who will hear what they say *and what they mean.*
- Ask:** The Hebrew word for teaching actually means "to cause to learn." Likewise, good mentors ask well-worded questions that **foster conversation and allow God to "cause the growth"** (1 Cor. 3:6). Visit <http://mentor.gofamilylife.com/the-mentor-guide/> for examples of well-worded questions.
- Consider:** **Think slowly and biblically** about the mentee's story. Don't get in a hurry. **Humbly introduce** Scripture and other FamilyLife resources for both you and the mentee to discuss together. Eagerly receive what's being said, but **diligently examine the Scriptures daily** to find truth (Acts 17:11). This will add richness to your mentoring experience.
- Encourage:** Whatever you offer your mentee, whether it's a compassionate tone, a practical life tip, or an exhortation from God's word, **make sure to uplift rather than beat down.** Be mindful of the roles of a mentor: Confidante, Translator, Experienced One, Coach, and Change Agent. Visit <http://mentor.gofamilylife.com/reference/roles-of-a-mentor/> for more information.

Avoiding common mistakes

- Avoid fixing.** Your instinct as a mentor will be to help, but this can easily shift into "fix it" mode, which will be unwelcome and counterproductive. **Treat mentees like people not projects.** Think more in terms of possible next steps. They'll feel the difference and respond better.
- Avoid preaching.** Walk alongside your mentees, **don't talk down** to them.
- Avoid carrying.** **Show concern for mentees but don't take responsibility** for their lives. Unreasonable expectations of yourself or the mentee will weigh you down and make you want to quit. Good mentors can "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2) without carrying too heavy a load (verse 5).
- Avoid blaming.** Mentees will often want to blame themselves or others for problems. Your part as a mentor is not to resolve those questions, but to help mentees discover where they can change by God's grace **without condemnation.**
- Avoid rescuing.** Remind yourself that you're not a savior; **you're just one piece of the puzzle** God is assembling in this person's life. Be satisfied playing your part and trust the true Savior with the rest.