

Support for Mentors

Mentoring lessons 3: The importance of benevolence

Mentors don't have to be best friends with their mentees, says Julie Starr, but benevolence is vital for mentoring success

Can you successfully mentor someone you don't feel a connection to, or might not even particularly like? The short answer is yes, you can still work with them in helpful ways. After all, you can still share knowledge and experience, give advice, etc. However, your mentoring will be more transactional in nature. It will function as an exchange of ideas and information, in a series of mutually convenient conversations.

While there is nothing wrong with a more transactional approach to mentoring, it changes the nature of your relationship. When **benevolence** - compassion and generosity - is lacking, you are likely to feel more detached towards your mentee. Whilst this isn't necessarily bad, your intolerance can increase while your sense of commitment decreases. For example, you might be reluctant to have a call out of hours or offer to help when you see an opportunity.

A sense of benevolence can be of great value to your mentee. Treat people with warmth and compassion and they're likely to feel safer in conversation, less judged and more supported. This enables them to disclose their thoughts more openly and perhaps tackle tougher and previously concealed issues that they might find difficult to share with anyone else.

Your position as a mentor is unique. You can blend an appropriate level of detachment with a genuine sense of warmth and interest. When dealing with workplace issues and challenges, a mentor can be a more appropriate person to turn to than a manager, or even a worried partner or spouse.

	<p>About Julie Starr</p> <p>Julie Starr's <i>The Mentoring Manual</i> has clear principles, tips, and free supporting downloads to enable managers and leaders to build effective mentoring relationships. Her other books, <i>The Coaching Manual</i> and <i>Brilliant Coaching</i> build coaching ability through simple principles and practical approaches. Julie is the founder of Starr Coaching, a leading provider of leadership and management development. Find out more at www.starrcoaching.co.uk and www.LearnStarr.com</p>
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