

Support for Mentors

Mentoring lesson 5: The importance of respect in the relationship

It's vital that mentees respect their mentors, so what can you do if it's lacking? Julie Starr highlights warning signs for mentors and offers advice to help build trust and influence.

For mentors to have influence, mentees must respect them. Respect usually grows naturally and initially; the mentee may be unclear about the value of mentoring and/or simply need to get to know their mentor better. You help this by being professional - arriving for meetings on time, ending on time and completing conversations effectively. So, assume that you have respect until you know that you don't!

Lack of respect can be passive - an absence that will naturally be fulfilled over time, however, a mentee's lack of respect can also deteriorate into contempt. Whilst real contempt is rare, even a mild form may result in the following types of mentee behaviour:

- Showing up late or cancelling meetings at short notice
- Displaying a lack of listening, frequently interrupting or constantly disagreeing
- Consistently ignoring the advice or opinion of the mentor
- Displaying little respect for the mentoring process, saying things like: 'I'm getting nothing from this' or 'This is a waste of time.'
- Criticism of the mentor, such as: 'They don't impress me/they've nothing to offer me.'

The above list makes for uncomfortable reading, and it's useful to acknowledge that these behaviours may be unrelated to anything the mentor has done. Ironically, 'over-efforting' to earn the respect of the mentee may even worsen the situation. Focus instead on your own behaviour. Here are some options to consider, to help build respect:

- **Demonstrate integrity:** Align your own behaviour with your advice and opinions, rather than simply giving advice/principles that you yourself don't follow.
- **Demonstrate respect:** Show interest in them and what's important to them, listen to them, display an ability to retain information about them, etc.
- **Encourage the mentee's interest:** Share your own achievements, interests, and values.
- **Be authentic:** Act naturally, and disclose mistakes/limits where appropriate.
- **Occasional mentoring reviews:** What's working, what's not, what needs to change?



THE MENTORING MANUAL
YOUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO BEING A BETTER MENTOR
JULIE STARR

About Julie Starr

Julie Starr's *The Mentoring Manual* has clear principles, tips, and free supporting downloads to enable managers and leaders to build effective mentoring relationships. Her other books, *The Coaching Manual* and *Brilliant Coaching* 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

