

Efficient Interpersonal Communication is a Prime Factor for the Success of a Mentoring Program

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Annals of SBV (2021); 10.5005/jp-journals-10085-8137

An ideal mentor–mentee relationship is built based on a stronger foundation of mutual trust. To triumph in this, an effective mentoring conversation is an essential factor that can lead to mutual understanding and trust. Unless there is a good conversation, it will be difficult to build trust which in turn will affect the learning process of the mentee. An efficient conversation only can bring out transformational thinking in the mentee and also make them share freely their personal issues and challenges. A good mentor should be a good listener, a guide, an efficient communicator, non-judgmental, and providing constructive feedback to solve the issues of a mentee.¹

To achieve all these, one must acquire the art of active listening. It is the most essential component of good mentoring communication skills that leads to a successful mentoring relationship. “Active listening is the ability to focus completely on a speaker, understand their message, comprehend the information and respond thoughtfully”.² We can use either verbal or non-verbal active listening skills to improve interpersonal communication.

Few things should be followed to increase the efficiency of the mentor and mentee meetings. These include a focused conversation on the set goals, the mentor can paraphrase and summarize the salient points shared by the mentee to prove that he/she has understood the points shared by the mentee, the mentor can ask open-ended questions to obtain additional information about the discussion points, disclosing relevant self-experiences, interpret and suggest solutions to solve issues or achieve goals on time. All these will favor a good, sustained relationship and help the mentee to achieve and accomplish his/her milestones on time.³

Things that need to be avoided to increase the efficiency of the mentor and mentee meeting are unnecessary arguments, talking irrelevant things or mentor dominating during the interaction, passive listening, being judgmental on the mentee’s behavior. All these will not establish a good rapport between the mentor and mentee and ends up in distrust and disagreement among them.¹ The communication between the mentor and mentee should be open and more authentic. Exchange of knowledge and experiences should be two-way and this helps to build a strong and rewarding relationship between them.

Feedback and reflection are the two important things that supplement mentoring communication. Giving constructive feedback for the personal and professional issues of a mentee is a must to guide the mentee to attain the set goals. Too much negative feedback can demotivate them and cannot bring out the expected outcomes. Constructive feedback will help the mentee to find solutions for their problems and enhance the process of learning and complete their task efficiently. Another factor that supplements mentoring communication is practicing reflection about the points discussed in each meeting. This will help the mentee to enhance

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How to cite this article: Parija SC, Shanmuganathan P. Efficient Interpersonal Communication is a Prime Factor for the Success of a Mentoring Program. *Ann SBV* 2021;10(1):1.

Source of support: Nil

Conflict of interest: None

the process of learning new skills, a better outcome, and find better solutions to solve the issues.

The frequency of mentor–mentee meetings should be at least once a month for an hour to establish a better sustainable relation. It can be an in-person meeting or through a video or voice call according to the convenience of the mentor and mentee.

Medical institutions need to organize faculty development programs on mentoring communication and feedback skills before implementing the mentoring program to train their faculty members and achieve the expected outcome. The internalization of the mentoring culture which results in transformative learning is a must for all medical professionals.⁴

Efficient communication in essence plays a significant role in the establishment of a good rapport between a mentor and mentee. This would result in successful career advancement and personal growth and development of a mentee.

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