

MENTORING . . . AND BEING MENTORED

Mentor:

- Not everyone may have the gifts, talents, and abilities to be a formal mentor, but those attributes can be learned and developed should an official receive an assignment to serve as a mentor in a formal, structured way. This instruction should be offered anyone accepting an official role as a mentor in an official association mentoring program.
- “Casual Mentoring”, however, is something everyone in an organization must be aware of and participate in. You’re always being observed, so you’re mentoring all the time. “You never know who is watching.” So never take a “night off”, engage in “short cuts”, or resort to sloppy mechanics and signaling, never bad-talk or denigrate the officiating avocation or those involved in it. There shouldn’t be any difference to you whether you’re being observed by your supervisor, assigner, trainer, a rookie, or no one at all. This attitude should prevail over everything you say and do as an official, whether while doing a game or outside the lines, stripes, or court.

SERVING AS A MENTOR REQUIRES . . .

Desire to set aside self for the benefit of another

Patience to be satisfied with less than expected improvement

Willingness to commit the time and effort

Tact and communication skills to give valued feedback

Clear, precise, and approved mechanics/positioning on the part of the mentor

Willingness for the mentee eventually to become better than the mentor

Being an ideal example as a student of the rules and situations

Growing in ability to identify the good in another person

Being an example of admitting when the mentor was wrong or could have done better

Desire to undertake enabling pre-game and post-game sessions

Avoids self-serving war stories

Resisting temptation to depreciate or talk down to the learner

Shunning the impulse to criticize the mentee in front of non-officials

Knowing the difference between criticism and constructive critique

Building trust with a new(er) official

Haste to praise correct things; patience to point out wrong things at the opportune time

Caution lest the mentor overload the learner

Knowing when to spoon feed rather than giving the mentee the whole cow at once

Honest yet understanding of the perspective of the one being mentored

Hesitancy to criticize other officials by name, stating situations anonymously instead

Being available off the court (phone, email, observing others' games)

Belief that the mentee can learn and get better

Use of self-depreciation and humor in reasonable doses according to one's personality

Giving of yourself and getting back more

Keeping expectations realistic yet challenging

Hesitancy to "dis" the mentee, yet need to be frank with the assigner regarding him/her

Inviting the learner into your locker room for your more advanced games

Asking good questions sometimes instead of merely stating good advice

Refusal to "show up" the learner on the court or in public

Inclination to rescue the new(er) official if necessary, yet allow constructive failing for the sake of learning when beneficial

Instilling confidence but not cockiness

Understanding if the relationship isn't a good match and honesty to make other arrangements if so

"When someone leans on you, you become steadier yourself"

BEING MENTORED

- All officials should be open to accept peer critique and feedback, whether in a mentor/mentee situation or in a peer-to-peer role. That means shedding the impulse of

defensiveness and opening up to the opinions of others. Accept what is stated, then take the time to decide later whether it truly applies for your benefit or not. Grow by allowing others to contribute to your growth as an official.

A PERSON BEING MENTORED, EITHER FORMALLY OR CASUALLY, NEEDS . . .

To be quick to listen, slow to react or defend oneself

To accept both just and unjust criticism, and sort out it all out later

To ask for clarification if the point isn't fully understood

To implement valid suggestions right away

To maintain a written log of learning points

To learn by observing others at higher levels, discerning the good and the less than good

To trust his/her mentor, yet verify things later by personal study

To avoid disappointment if the mentor "comes across wrong" or seems harsh

To avoid critiquing veterans unless asked to – and then very carefully and briefly (questions best)

To have reasonable goals, written and verified by others as to their validity and wisdom

To learn off the court by frequently observing the mentor and others at a higher level

To give credit to his/her mentor for the improvement achieved

To pause before immediately reacting to critique

To speak up during other's post-game meetings only when invited...and then quite succinctly

To maintain a positive attitude

To ask lots of questions, but to respect the mentor's time commitment involved

To do whatever it takes to get as many games as possible on video