

The Power of Mentoring

The purpose of mentoring is to encourage, support and guide nurses in their positions so they can continue to grow personally and professionally.

Ideally, mentoring begins when a nurse completes orientation, but it can occur at any point in a nurse's career. Preceptors also can mentor and be mentored. Most successful preceptors have either a formal or informal mentor. Mentoring works best when it is intentional.

Mentoring offers nurses:

- professional and personal satisfaction
- socialization
- career growth, certification
- increased knowledge and understanding of shared governance
- new challenges, opportunities

Can you precept and mentor the same nurse?

You can be both a preceptor and mentor; mentoring generally occurs after precepting. It is important to clearly define your role so that expectations are met.

Nurses are more comfortable serving as preceptors because they like to show or demonstrate their skills. However, nurses that are mentors are often surprised by how much they benefit from their relationships with mentees.

Watch for upcoming educational opportunities to become a mentor! Contact Meda Bower at mbower@saint-lukes.org or 913/317-3998, to learn more.

The Do's and Don'ts of a Successful Mentoring Relationship

When mentoring, keep in mind these Do's.

- ❑ Take time to get to know the mentee.
- ❑ Understand the uniqueness of each individual. What works for you may not work for someone else.
- ❑ Take a few moments before you meet with the mentee to mentally prepare and remind yourself of the purpose of mentoring.
- ❑ Share information about yourself, particularly about your early career experiences and your life outside of work.
- ❑ Be positive. Encourage, praise and compliment when appropriate.
- ❑ Ask thought-provoking, open-ended questions.
- ❑ Listen more and talk less.
- ❑ Empathize; don't sympathize – it can make individuals feel like victims.
- ❑ Communicate high, but not unrealistic, expectations.
- ❑ Be consistent with your time commitment to the mentee.
- ❑ Try to give concrete examples related to the topics you are discussing.
- ❑ Remember it is not your job to solve or fix the mentee's problems but to help the mentee to find the skills to do it.
- ❑ Encourage responsibility.
- ❑ Try and identify the mentee's strengths, talents and assets. Focus on these rather than the weaknesses.
- ❑ Be open and be honest, but do not burden the mentee with information that he or she does not need to know.
- ❑ Share both your failures and successes. Focus on what you have learned.
- ❑ Understand your role: to help another grow in wisdom, judgment, resilience and independence.
- ❑ Establish confidentiality as soon as possible.
- ❑ Have fun.

Prevent mentoring problems by avoiding these Don'ts.

- ❑ Make assumptions.
- ❑ Expect to have an instant rapport with the mentee.
- ❑ Ask only questions that can be answered with a "yes" or a "no."
- ❑ Talk too much. This is easy to do if the mentee is quiet or you are uncomfortable.
- ❑ Fall into the trap of trying to solve the mentee's issues. Remember, you are not the parent or a therapist.
- ❑ Become overly partisan. Part of your role is to offer perspective.
- ❑ Share your personal problems unless this is relevant to how you have used this as an opportunity for growth.
- ❑ Nag, cajole, criticize or overly question the mentee.
- ❑ Make commitments and promises that you can't keep.
- ❑ Take the mentee's comments personally. Remember, this time is about and for the mentee.
- ❑ Violate confidences.

Source: Nurse Mentoring Toolkit Manual, 2008