

Do You Want To Be A Better Mentor?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, December 20, 2014

<https://politicsrespun.org/2014/12/do-you-want-to-be-a-better-mentor/>

Probably.

But maybe you don't actually know that you are a mentor now. You probably are, but if you are more mindful of relationships with your informal apprenticeships, you will realize all the people who are getting wisdom from you.

Maybe you think you're too young, or too busy, or too new to your gig. Or maybe you're a misanthropist.

If the latter, you've already stopped reading.

If one of the former ideas strikes truth for you, consider these:

1. There is always someone younger than you who can benefit from your mentorship. If you're in a job or university or college, there are teens around you with sparklers in their eyes. Figure out where they think they're headed and flesh it out with them. Introduce them to people or writers who have something to say to them.
2. You are not too busy to spend even a few minutes with someone who is more of a rookie than you. It's simple. Ask them how they're doing in their gig: what's working, what's hard, and why. That's five minutes. Look for dead time in your week and slot in quick chats with people around you with those eye sparklers.
3. And if you're new, your newness gives you a fresh perspective. Some veterans have lost their soul and drive and need the jolt you naturally possess. You can actually mentor them to places of new meaning.

Informal mentorship is awesome. There are no pre-nups. The best way to mentor others is to open your eyes and ears to who is around you. Be curious. Ask them questions. Find the people who are curious and energetic and getting things done and talking like they have much more to accomplish.

Then ask them questions some more. Find common ground. Suggest possibilities, but don't forget to complicate their lives by gently challenging what they've learned, to make sure they know they're well grounded.

And when your apprentices mention successes, review with them all the ways they're awesome. Point out what they did right. And when they hit a wall, help them see the big picture and re-group with all they possess. And whenever you're tempted to speak a cliché at them, remember to re-phrase it as a unique statement that reflects your relationship and their experience.

Then, take stock. Periodically, it's worth it to review the people in your life who are informally apprenticing with you. It's the ending of 2014. Write down [on some actual paper, not a tablet] who you are mentoring. Figure out who will need less of you and more of you in 2015. For those who will need less of you, steer them to their next mentor possibilities, but don't forget to keep checking in with them, just less often.

And as you do this, revisit your sense of who have been your mentors in the past. I've had almost 2 dozen in the last 3 decades. If you can't list them, you can't draw from them what you need to give to your apprenticeships.

And remember, it's all about relationships. It's not about reciprocity as much as it is about paying it forward. Like the Beatles: in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.

Finally, read this great article written for people seeking mentors. Figure out how to be see-able by them. That's your job as a mentor.

It's a great article, but ignore this part below about how the personal is irrelevant. If you think you can slice off people's vocational life to mentor, distinct from their whole person, stop trying to mentor now.

Your personal life is irrelevant. Your excuses aren't going to fly. If you get asked to do something, do it the way it was asked. If that means staying up all night to do it, then ok (but that's to stay your little secret). No one cares what's going on with you, or at least, they shouldn't have to.

via [This Is Why You Don't Have a Mentor - 99U](#).

Don't forget to click this link, above, to read the rest of the piece; the rest is worth your time!