

The Value of Mentoring in Nursing: An Honor and a Gift

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Mentoring is often thought of as a more experienced person sharing information, advice, knowledge, or training with a novice. A mentor might be engaged to assist a person to achieve a goal, complete a project, or facilitate a transition to a different role or an expanded level of responsibility. Mentoring can be formal or informal, short or long term, episodic or ongoing, planned or spontaneous. A mentor can be a volunteer or someone specifically hired or assigned and matched according to the competency required. A mentor may also be identified by the person seeking to be mentored.

Mentors may come from many walks of life—parents, siblings, educators, colleagues, clerics, friends or classmates, or bosses. Even a client or patient might offer informal guidance and meaningful feedback. No two mentors are alike. Styles will vary. Some will coach, whereas others will instruct. Some will help their mentees learn from their mistakes, whereas others will be direct. Some will assign tasks and meet regularly with their mentees, whereas others prefer to counsel or provide advice as needed. A mentor can help a new member or employee understand the values and culture of an organization.

Mentoring in the Literature

A large body of research about mentoring in a host of environments—academic, workplace,

addiction rehabilitation, science, ministry, youth and adolescent—exists. A select number of articles representing a variety of fields were reviewed; favorable results from mentoring were reported in all fields. Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and DuBois (2008) described a meta-analysis of the mentoring research published from 1985–2006 for youth, academic, and workplace mentoring. Despite some differences related to the age of the populations, Eby et al. (2008) found mentoring to be significantly related to favorable social, attitudinal, personal, motivational, and career outcomes in all three environments. Most of the articles specific to nursing detailed the value of mentoring for job retention and satisfaction (Greene & Puetzer, 2002; Latham, Hogan, & Ringl, 2008). International interest in this subject exists as well. An article from Taiwan (Weng, Huang, Tsai, Lin, & Lee, 2010) recommended that nurse managers include career development and role modeling as functions of mentoring. Australian authors Nelsey and Brownie (2012) discussed the challenges and strengths of diverse generations of nurses working together, realizing the value in generational diversity and believing that retention rates will benefit if strategies are designed that employ the knowledge and talent of the more experienced nurses to mentor the younger nurses.