

Students should tell their mentor what they want to learn



NEIL O'CONNOR

commitment and efforts. You will benefit more if you can identify specific skills you want to learn or improve on, and identify the areas of knowledge you are lacking. Share these with your mentor, who can then appreciate your effort and willingness to learn

Learning is a two-way process Mentors can also benefit from your experience and knowledge, and may gain insights and enthusiasm from you. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with a mentor makes them feel valued and will strengthen the relationship and deepen mutual respect.

Practice what you learn Whenever the opportunity presents itself, apply what you learn. This is the best way to find out whether what you are learning is appropriate for you and the situation. Feed back to your mentor the positive and negative results of your learning so that your mentor is better able to offer guidance and provide appropriate input.

Be open and honest Relationships between people based on honesty, openness and trust tend to be beneficial for everyone involved. The more you invest in terms of these qualities, the more your mentor will be willing to support you, and share

Watch, listen and learn

Nicola Davies explains how students can gain a wealth of knowledge by tapping into their mentors' expertise

Reaping the maximum benefit from the mentoring process requires commitment from nursing students, honesty and openness about learning needs and a willingness to learn.

Here are some tips on how undergraduates can learn the most from their mentors:

Mentors are role models Adopt the attitude that you are working with someone well versed in the finer nuances of effective communication with patients, colleagues, other professionals and the public.

Make a point of reviewing what mentors can show you about communicating in difficult situations, conflict resolution, different modes of communication and approaches to teamwork.

Appreciate their support Mentors' experience makes them the best person to offer guidance and alternative perspectives on the challenges you face. They have been through similar experiences

and have learned from experience how to react to these.

Observe their professional skills Time management, dealing with multiple problems simultaneously and making informed decisions under pressure are valuable skills that all professionals need in their repertoire. Mentors have probably developed these skills

“ RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON HONESTY AND TRUST TEND TO BE BENEFICIAL FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED

the hard way, yet they are handing you this experience free of charge.

Value feedback Do not take reports from your mentor about your progress personally. Your mentor's objective feedback is designed to help you achieve your goals as a professional, not to cast doubt on your personal attributes.

Be proactive The success of your relationship with your mentor depends a lot on your

their experience, skills, and insights in the interests of your professional development **NS**

Nicola Davies is a health psychologist and writer

RESOURCES

RCN guidance for mentors

tinyurl.com/RCN-mentor-guidance

Nursing Standard's student pages

nursingstandard.rcnpublishing.co.uk/students

Most universities publish guidance for nursing students on how to relate to your mentor