

Mentoring Moments

By Karel Murray, CSP

My husband, Rick, has a pained expression on his face as he watches me try to catch a piece of paper in the parking lot that had escaped our car. I would approach the paper slowly (in stealth mode like a lion advancing on its prey), only to have a sudden gust of wind whisk it upward and out of my reach. After a few failed attempts, he finally shouts “Just run up to it and step on it!”

The man’s a genius. Mission accomplished with the next attempt.

Mentoring is much like that...watching another person quietly try to accomplish a task without much success and then the mentor offers invaluable advice which makes all the difference in the world. Now if we would only become more proactive in preventing problems...

Technically, the mentoring moment with Rick should have happened before the paper blew out of our car. A small suggestion that I gather up my trash prior to opening my door on a very windy day would have eliminated my need to act like a ninja in broad daylight.

Being a mentor is a quiet way of building a coaching relationship. Consider a baby duck learning to swim for the first time. They watch the mother duck slip effortlessly into the water as they dance on one foot then the other before making the leap of faith to follow suit. The calm confidence of their mother and mentor provides a foundation from which to leap into unknown territory.

Setting aside time on a regular basis to evaluate progress with your mentor can be extremely satisfying, especially when the exchange of information is a two way street between you and a younger person. We might just see the magic in having a different point of view which gives us the extra push to incorporate new thoughts and perspectives into our problem solving process. With our world literally changing in an exponential manner due to technology and society issues, that moment to sit down and breathe can be rewarding on so many levels.

Take a chance and approach someone you respect and admire and ask if they would consider being your mentor. If they say yes, follow these five (5) tips to enhance that relationship:

1. **Set a regular scheduled meeting time and place.** The amount of time doesn’t have to be significant, but should be long enough to explore a topic fully before having to pack up and leave.
2. **Never waste your mentor’s time.** Identify the main reason for your meetings and if necessary, create an agenda in advance. Knowing what will be discussed will not only help your mentor to prepare, you will be able to cover twice the territory in your allotted time.
3. **Do what you promised to do.** Nothing frustrates a mentor or coach more than ignoring the tasks you promised to complete before the next meeting. Sure, sometimes

circumstances make it unavoidable, however, a consistent pattern of making promises and breaking them will end a mentoring relationship quickly and possibly forever. All you have to do is meet your mentor half way.

4. **Select topics that reinforce your strengths.** Spend time using the advice from your mentor to build your competence to a higher level. Frequently, much of what you will learn will center on “approaches” to problem solving. When you know what your strengths are, the more effectively you can incorporate the advice from your mentor.
5. **Provide value back to your mentor.** As the mentoring relationship deepens, you will begin to realize you also have advice and experiences to share with your mentor. Never fail to ask “How can I be of service to you?” Your mentor may never ask anything of you, but they will always remember that you offered. That is huge.

I consider my marriage as one big mentoring relationship. No one knows me better than my spouse. He’s much more proactive with me now and gives me advice before something happens. That’s a lesson we learned when Rick watched me vigorously dry a wet cookie sheet with a cotton towel when we were first married. He called my name getting ready to suggest I lighten my touch. I turned my head to look at him which in turn caused me to take my eye off the towel. My hand slipped off the top of the cookie sheet which was bent away from me. Like a cartoon noise, a resounding “whap” filled the kitchen as the cookie sheet slammed into my head. Dazed, I looked to my husband for support and advice.

Rick, in his best mentoring voice offered this observation... “At least it wasn’t a frying pan”.

Priceless.

Karel Murray is a Certified Speaking Professional, author of "Hitting Our Stride: Women, Work and What Matters" and business trainer who helps entrepreneurs and executives resolve interpersonal issues and balance their work/personal lives. Now, you can listen to her exciting, free interviews that will help you maintain and sustain a healthy business and lifestyle at <http://www.JustForAMomentPodcast.com>. To learn more about Karel Murray, please go to her website <http://www.Karel.com> or her blog at <http://www.HittingOurStride.net>