Finding a Mentor

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a mentor as a *trusted counselor or guide* and as such, how people define counselors or guides changes from one person to the next.

Mentors come from various aspects of life. Mentors can be teachers, supervisors, colleagues, friends, employers, etc. Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. They can happen organically or they can have happen structurally (see below)

Building personal and professional mentorship relationships with other can benefit both parties if done so well. Finding a good mentor will help:

- Assess your strength and weakness
- Introduce new perspectives and correct any wrong thinking
- Boost your ability to make decisions
- Introduce you to important resources and references

A mentor should be:

- Someone you can trust
- Someone who affirms you when needed, but challenges you when Is necessary
- Someone you want to learn from
- Someone you can vent to
- Someone who can give you advice

Here are a few tips on how to find a mentor:

- Develop a relationship before asking for someone to be your mentor - “do you want to be my mentor?” might not work well unless you have seen someone in action. You want to make sure this person can provide the things you are looking for.

- If you do end up asking someone to become your mentor, let them know why you seek them out - it’s important for them to get a sense of what you are looking for. Decide what specific role you would like your mentor to provide. They might not the best person for you, but might know others who can be.

- Think about developing multiple mentoring relationships with different folks. Someone who might be great at giving you professional advice, might not necessarily be great at other advice. Remember that mentoring relationship can be reciprocal. Mentors can easily learn from their mentees. It is completely ok for you to ask your mentor if they need anything from you. This will show them that you are willing to give and take to strengthen the relationship.
As a mentee, you should:

- Be willing to do the work - maintaining mentoring relationships takes time and effort. Do not put it all on the other person.
- Be specific with what you need - mentors will appreciate direction and guidance to better serve your needs.
- Show your appreciation - write, text, or call and let your mentor what you are doing and thank them for helping you. If you choose, your gratitude can include a small gift.