



What To Look For In A Mentor

By Ann Rolfe

“When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves”

William Arthur Ward

There are three criteria to use when choosing a mentor. You want to find a person you **respect**, who is **credible** and has **positive intent**.

1. Respect: These days a mentor is not necessarily older or smarter than you but they are someone whose opinion you value. Perhaps they seem to have a moral compass that guides them. Maybe you resonate to the principles they live by. You see them as a positive role model. You don't need to agree with everything they say or do but you recognize their personal integrity and you are able to build enough rapport with them to have productive conversations.

2. Credible: Your mentor has accomplishments. They are not necessarily in a senior role or even in the paid workforce at all. They may be a quiet achiever just going about life. They may or not be an expert in your own field. Maybe they have made their own journey and left a trail you might like to follow. They know the obstacles and challenges you'll face. Or they could be travelling a parallel path to yours. In any case, you believe that they know what they are talking about in an area that you want to know about.

3. Good Intent: Your mentor will be someone who is motivated by wanting positive outcomes for you. They have an altruistic desire to see you achieve what's best for you. Because of that, they generally don't push you in the “right” direction but rather help you see a range of alternatives, evaluate them and figure out the direction that's right for you.

I've had and still have lots of mentors. It's likely you have too - even if it's only in hindsight you'd label them that. Mentoring can be an ongoing, regular, ad-hoc or even a one-off conversation. The word “mentor” might never be mentioned but the conversations leave a lasting impression.

Most of my mentors have been people with whom I've had other professional relationships, a boss, business collaborator or colleague. Some of them may not know that they mentored me but

the conversations we had were meaningful. I learned from them and applied those lessons because that's how mentoring works.