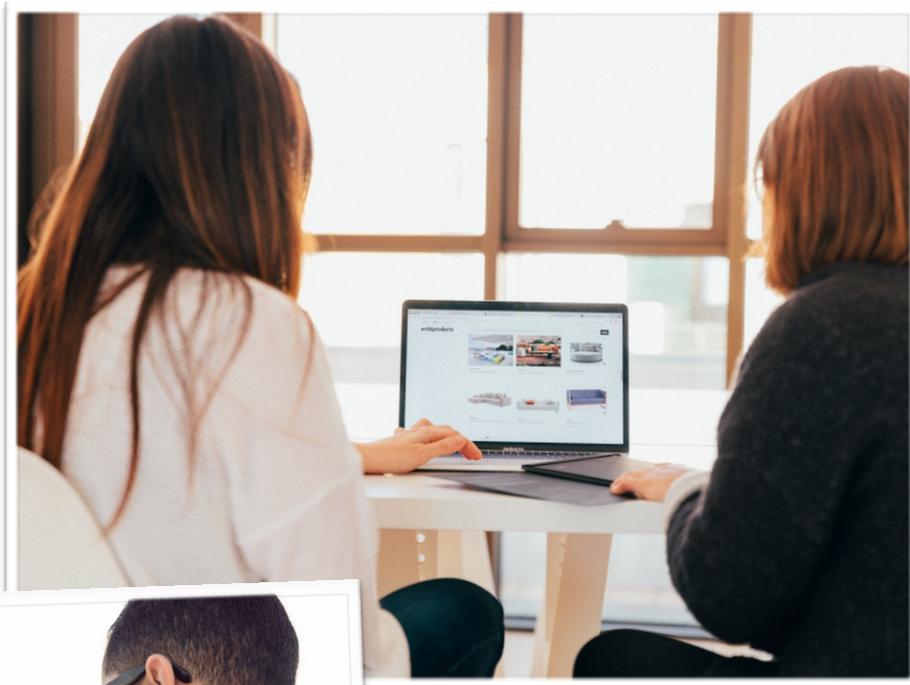


Mentorship:

What is it and how do I start?



What exactly *is* mentorship, and what should you expect from it? In a mentor/mentee relationship, learning is the main objective. You will have the priceless opportunity to openly and safely ask questions about the field they are in, the transition process from college to the professional world, as well as receive general advice and tips from someone with relevant professional and life experience. As a mentee, you are expected to drive the mentoring relationship. This means you should make clear what you wish to learn and put in the effort to set up meetings and ask for advice yourself. Do not expect your mentor to find you a job or “be your in” to a company or industry. Your mentor is there to offer wisdom, insight, and offer feedback to you.

The idea of having a mentor may seem intimidating at first, and you may feel like you are asking for a lot without giving much back. Actually, many successful people are more than happy to help out a young professional as they learn the ropes of their industry. Mentors often see themselves in their mentees, as they were once in their shoes. Many of the great names in business you’ve heard about including Steve Jobs, Mark Zuckerberg, and Bill Gates all had mentors that helped them in significant ways.

Finding the right mentor is extremely important. Not only are you looking for someone who works in an industry or position that you are interested in learning more about, you also want to find someone you can relate to and converse with. Look through possible mentors, and when you’ve decided on someone you think you could learn from and would match well with, send a message to request a meeting (more on this in our article *Making the Most of the Andrews Network*). Do some research on your potential mentor so you are familiar with what they do and where they work before you speak with them (browse through their company’s website, and read through their Andrews Network or LinkedIn profile).

An in-person meeting is preferable, but a video or voice call will work just as well, especially if your mentor lives across the country. Have questions prepared for the meeting, but allow the conversation to happen naturally. Check out our other article, *5 Great Questions to Ask your Mentor*, for some ideas. It’s best to have this conversation with a possible mentor before requesting a longer-term mentorship role to see if the two of you will be a good fit. This initial meeting is a great way to find out if you could benefit from this person’s guidance and knowledge for a duration of several weeks or months. Send a thank you note after the meeting, and request to meet again if you are interested.

When you ask someone to be your mentor, be clear about what you would like to get out of the relationship. Let him/her know what you are looking to gain, what kind of mentorship you would like, and set up a time frame (see next page for specific examples). Your mentor should never be confused about your goals within mentorship. Be proactive by planning meetings, show professionalism in the way you speak and act, and take advice and feedback seriously. Mentorship is a great opportunity, and you will learn a lot!

What am I looking to gain?

- Knowledge about working in the healthcare industry?
- Learning about the career path toward becoming a senior engineer?
- Assistance with my resume and interviewing skills?
- How to succeed in graduate school?
- How to successfully start and grow a business as an entrepreneur?
- Transitioning from student to professional? Succeeding in my field? Innovation? Time management? Community involvement? Staying spiritually connected in the business world? The list of possible questions and topics is wide!

What kind of mentorship would I like?

- A one-time conversation?
- Structured mentorship relationship committed to meeting monthly/regularly for discussions?
- Keeping it simple with conversations and answered questions? Or recommended books and topics meant to stretch and challenge me?
- Do I want a local mentor I can meet with in person? Or am I open to a mentor anywhere in the country (or world!)? Do I prefer to talk on Zoom or via the phone, or am I just hoping for a few email exchanges?

What time frame am I hoping for?

- One year of mentorship with monthly meetings? One semester with conversations on an “as needed” basis? Weekly calls for one month?
- Structured 30-minute calls? An hour of my mentor’s time in conversation?