

From the Co-Editors: On Mentors and Mentoring (Mentors Mentoring Mentees)

The many ways in which the terms *mentor* and *mentoring* are used in higher education, business, the armed services, and elementary and secondary education can be bewildering. The concepts seem to be ubiquitous in modern social organizations. They are used in the practice of academic advising in colleges and universities. The many ways in which *mentor* and *mentoring* are used are perhaps most completely captured by Johnson and Ridley (2004) in their description of 57 elements that are key to effective mentoring. Those elements were distilled from over 1,000 mentoring publications from business, psychology, education, and other fields. One of Johnson and Ridley's most provocative thoughts is illustrated as follows: "Authentic mentors never stop mentoring" (p. 133). Their statement raises the question: What makes mentoring authentic?

Johnson and Ridley's (2004) use of the term *authentic* is reminiscent of how the term *caring* is being used in elementary and secondary school research: The difference between aesthetic and authentic caring probes at the essence behind James F. Hind's famous quote, "People want to know how much you care before they care how much you know." In aesthetic caring the focus is on things, ideas, form, and nonpersonal content. In authentic caring, the focus is on forming a reciprocal personal relationship in which the focus is on a person's subjective reality (Noddings, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). We speculate that concepts of aesthetic and authentic caring have parallels with mentoring.

Since the time of Homer, the term *mentor* has been ascribed to a person who shares wisdom, promotes someone's career, and actively engages in a meaningful personal relationship with the mentee. Many terms are associated with this role including *advisor*, *counselor*, *guide*, *tutor*, *teacher*, *example*, *precursor*, *guru*, *coach*, *advocate*, and *sponsor*. Mentor, in Homer's epic poem, "The Odyssey," was all of those to Odysseus's son Telemachus during Odysseus's 21-year absence. All of those terms are used as action verbs in our language: counselors counsel, guides guide, tutors teach, and coaches coach. All of these action verbs and the roles they illustrate are applied to the professional, social, and personal aspects of a mentee's life.

Stone (1999), in writing for a business management audience, made useful distinctions between coaching, counseling, and mentoring that may be applicable to academic advising. She referred to

coaching as continually developing all employees so that they do their jobs well. Through coaching, employees gain the skills, abilities, and knowledge they need to develop professionally and become more effective in their current jobs. Coaching involves gathering information, listening, being aware of the environment, instructing employees, and giving feedback (pp. 14–15). Through coaching similar to that described by Stone, an advisor attempts to develop all of his or her advisees to succeed in the higher education experience whether that experience is focused on the academic, social, or personal aspects of their lives.

Stone (1999) conceived counseling as a non-punitive four-step disciplinary process in which employees who are not working up to par are directed in how to improve. The four steps are verbal counseling, written warning, demotion or transfer, and termination (pp. 91–93). Stone suggested that managers functioning as counselors should a) communicate openly, directly, and honestly; b) practice active listening; and c) probe and question. These counseling skills enable a manager to make clear an employee's responsibility, to note when the employee is not delivering at the proper level of performance, and to convey that improvement is expected. In parallel to a manager, an advisor assumes a limited counseling role by making a student aware of the shortcomings in her or his academic performance, helping her or him identify causes for those shortcomings, and then assisting the advisee with referrals to services such as tutoring, counseling, financial aid, or legal advice (see Kuhn, Gordon, & Webber, 2006).

According to Stone (1999, p. 3), mentoring is reserved for the best employees, and in the case of mentoring, a manager goes beyond coaching and becomes "role model, coach, broker, and advocate for . . . outstanding performers. . . ." This is much more than teaching an employee to do his or her job well. Functioning as coach, broker, and advocate for a mentee, the mentor, by sharing experience, wisdom, and political savvy, enables top performers to take on tasks beyond those designated in their job descriptions (pp. 161–62). The application of this concept to academic advising seems obvious: Under Stone's model, professors and advisors go beyond coaching and limited counseling roles and work with outstanding students to further those students' professional, academic, social, and personal goals.

Furthermore, in this capacity, they also shoulder more than their designated responsibilities, taking a personal interest in the student's development.

While Stone's (1999) business application of coaching, counseling, and mentoring do not reflect how mentoring skills are implemented in education, the distinctions are useful. Coaching is undertaken by advisors for all of their advisees. Counseling is typically handed over to professors or specialized professionals who deal with problems and remedies. In their idealistic profession, most advisors aspire to be a mentor to all of their advisees; however, Stone makes the useful distinction that true, authentic mentoring is best reserved for a few outstanding students.

Using Stone's (1999) distinctions between coaching, counseling, and mentoring along with the further distinction of aesthetic and authentic mentoring, one can easily see how an advisor can care about a student and can show that care without being a mentor. Mentoring programs, offered on a mass scale, while good and effective, have the perfunctory essence of aesthetic caring rather than the more personal characteristic of authentic caring.

Authentic mentoring relationships, like marriage, are a bonding created through the consent and desire of both parties. Even though a student may adopt an advisor or a professor as a mentor, and even though that mentor can have a profound effect on the student (even though the advisor or professor is unaware of the impact), that relationship has limited potential compared to a relationship that is established through mutual acceptance by both parties. In an authentic mentoring relationship the mentor, like Mentor, takes on responsibility for

the development of a mentee, like Telemachus. For 20 years Mentor acted as Telemachus's teacher, advisor, friend, and surrogate father. He taught not only the skills Telemachus might need in battle, but also the values he would need to succeed as ruler of Ithaca.

In conclusion, authentic mentoring does not function as a means to an end (i.e., persistence to graduation; a retention strategy in undergraduate education). Such outcomes may occur as by-products, but the primary purpose of authentic mentoring is the development of the mentee.

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