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Be a Memorable Mentor!

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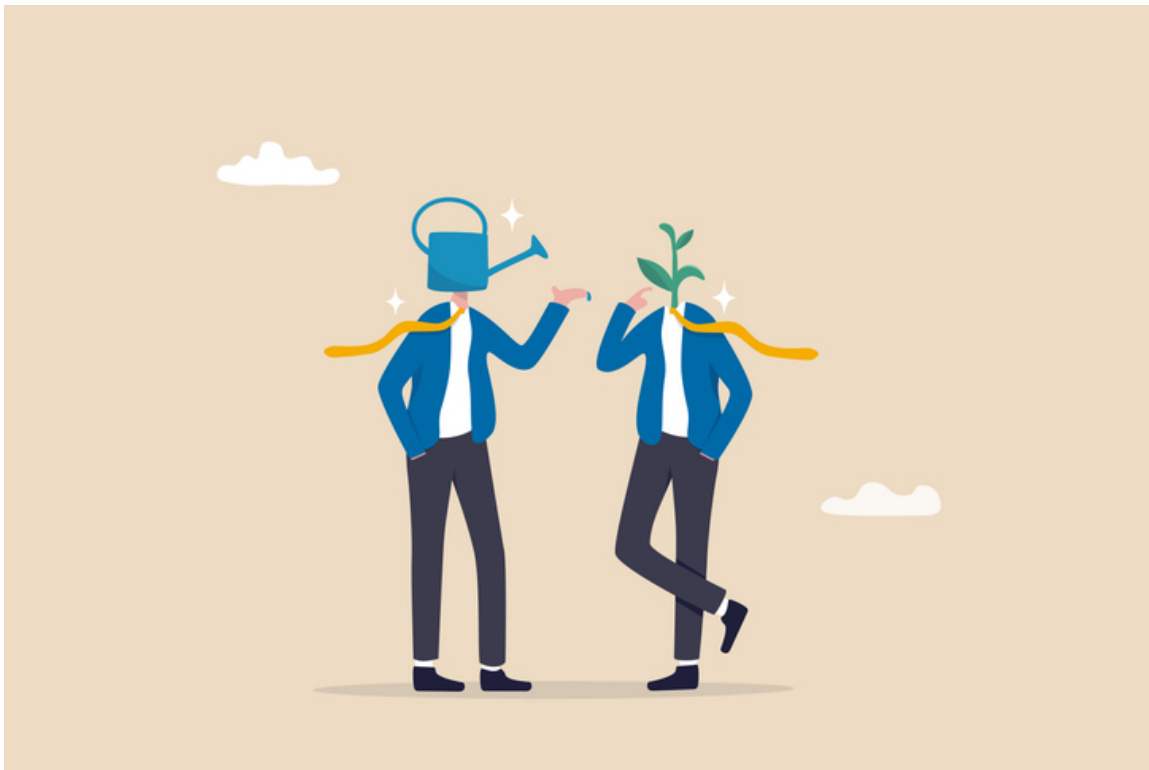


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Did you have a mentor?

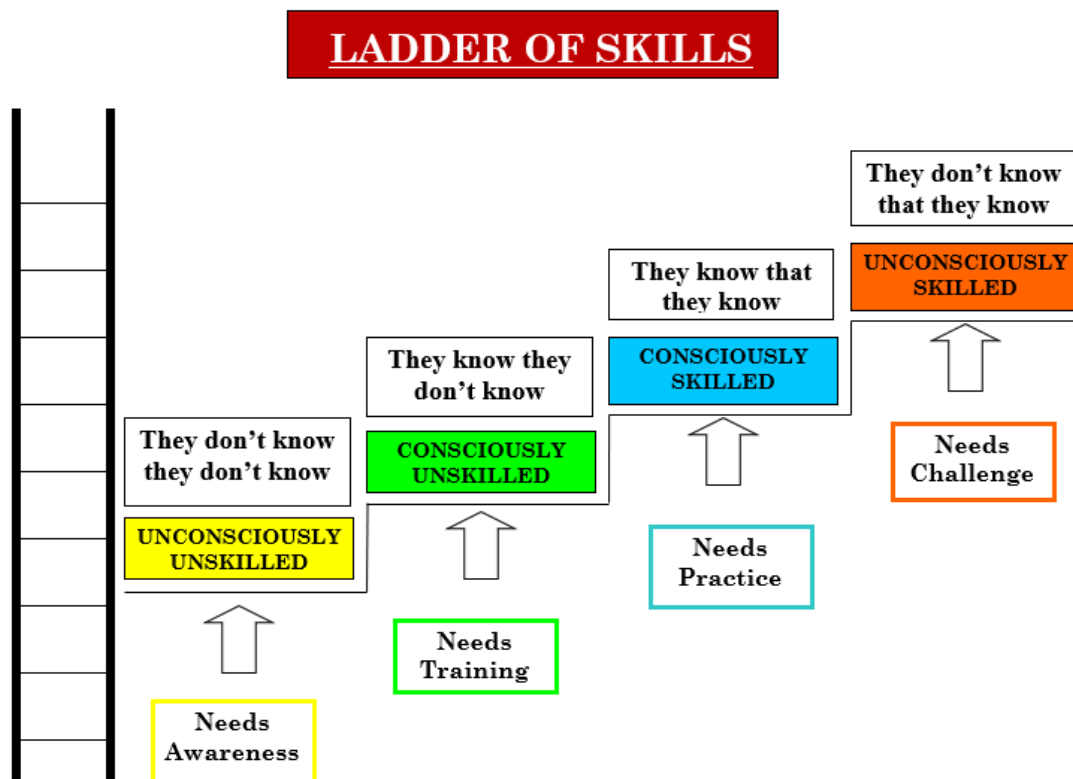
**Many of us have informal mentors who helped us
in many memorable ways and we are grateful to them.**

I certainly am. Today, many companies provide mentoring programs and match

mentors with mentees – sometimes it’s voluntary, sometimes not. It doesn’t really matter what structure there is or isn’t for you to be a mentor. You can be a mentor without a structure or even an agreement that you are a mentor. What’s important is that you share with younger or newer folks lessons you’ve learned and things that can make their jobs easier and their path smoother and more successful. One thing though, before offering advice, always ask first. There’s a fine line between being a mentor and overstepping and offending someone trying so hard to prove themselves to you and others.

So how do you do it?

First, let me share a model I use so often with clients for a myriad of reasons. Below this model, and the explanation of it, is a list of tips/questions to help you be a memorable mentor!



Stage 1 – Unconsciously Unskilled

Folks who are young or new are often unaware of things they don’t know. They are unconsciously unskilled and they need awareness to help them realize there’s a body of knowledge or skill they didn’t know anything about and need to learn.

Mentor Lesson:

Don’t ever assume that someone does or does not know something. Ask and then

check for understanding lest they say yes because they think they're supposed to know something and don't want to admit they don't.

What can you share with them to raise their awareness and help them want to learn more?

Stage 2 – Consciously Unskilled

Folks at various points become aware there's something they really know nothing about – whether it's knowledge or a skill and it would be helpful for them to learn more.

Mentor Lesson:

Folks who realize there is something they don't know about or know how to do need training, but that doesn't mean they know how to go about getting that training in the most valuable and expeditious way.

How can you help provide or make recommendations for the right training and open doors for funding or other opportunities around such training?

Stage 3 – Consciously Skilled

Once folks are trained and they realize they now have the knowledge, doesn't necessarily mean they know how to apply the knowledge or have expertise with a skill.

Mentor Lesson:

Folks with knowledge often are anxious to apply it and show that they can do it, and they may or may not be aware that having learned something is the same as being skilled at it. They may still be unconsciously unskilled about the nuances of what they have learned or the many additional levels they don't really know about. At this point, they need practice, mentoring and opportunities to shadow someone or work with someone who can show them in real life what application and use of the knowledge and skills looks like.

Ask them how they would like support and with what. Ask them where they could use some training wheels. How can you provide lessons from your own experience, allow them to sit in with you or be with them as they start to apply their learning to be someone to go to with questions or help them see how they can tweak what they're doing to make a huge difference. If you're not the

person, to whom can you introduce them who would be the right fit?

Stage 4 – Unconsciously Skilled

At some point experienced subject matter experts lose their awareness of what they have learned. It becomes automatic, second nature and they lose their awareness that others don't know what they do.

Mentor Lesson:

This level is about YOU! When you have done something for a long time and you are expert at it, you become “unconsciously skilled” which means that you no longer realize the difference between what you learned and what you know how to do. At this point, it's easy to think that what you do is common sense, and because it's easy for you, you can make the mistake of thinking therefore that it's easy for everyone. What you can't see at this level, is that much of what you assume others know, particularly those starting out, they really don't know because they haven't been taught or haven't had the experience to learn the hard way. You need to be challenged to figure out what you know that you can impart to a mentee.

How can you put yourself back at the first rung of the ladder and begin to walk up the ladder with the other person, starting at the beginning again (which was a long time ago for you.) You have to remember what you learned.

Let me share an example from my own life.

I was a professional negotiator for 28 years with the teachers' union in Pennsylvania. After I retired and started a consulting practice, I offered to provide a breakout session at a women's conference on negotiations skills. Then I realized I had no clue where to start in putting that content together. I couldn't imagine what I really had to offer. Then a friend needed my help negotiating a job offer. As I helped her through that, at every turn she was going to do the wrong thing and I redirected her. She ultimately came out with the right job and a great offer. But, I learned something very important – I didn't know what I knew. Every wrong step she was about to take caused me to figuratively slap my forehead and say to myself, oh my gosh – even what is the most basic of negotiations skills to me, she doesn't know. It was then I realized what I had to offer and it became easy to develop my content, which, by the way was a huge hit.

**More tips for mentors in the form of questions
for you to think about:**

- What have you learned the hard way so you can save someone else from having to learn that way?
- What do you do automatically that you learned a long time ago that others might not know?
- What are the best practices you've learned? If you're going to share them, be sure you're ready with the "why" it's the best and what you learned from trying other ways.
- What are short cuts you use? Again, be prepared with the "why".
- What are the rabbit holes to avoid, why and what should someone do instead?
- What are political hot potatoes to stay away from, why and how does one avoid them or get around them?
- What have you learned about managing office politics? What are the do's and don'ts and why?
- What does someone need to know before they put their foot in their mouth? – For example, help someone learn who the players are, who is connected to whom, who is aligned with whom, what are the hot button issues for different people, and what should they keep their mouth closed about?
- What's the culture about? What should they know and how do they best fit in?
- How does a young person appropriately get their voice in the room, at the right time, with the right people and in the right way?
- How does a person expand their network?
- How can you help them learn to begin networking to find solutions?
- How can they learn to collaborate with others by introducing them to people?
- What are professional organizations to join and how can those help them in their career?
- Where do you go in terms of professional networks and can you invite them to join you?
- What are their career goals and how can you support their growth toward those goals?

And lastly

Be a sounding board for them to try out their ideas.

Be a cheerleader to encourage them with their progress and successes.

Be their encourager when they fail – learning through failure is a good thing, especially if there's someone there to ask them what they learned and what approach they will use the next time!

Be a sponsor – which means talk about them in favorable ways to those above you and peers in other departments aligned with the person's career goals and path. Let leaders know the value this person is bringing.

Be a memorable mentor!

It is truly rewarding for both of you!

Best of luck and if I can help you, reach out for a complimentary call.

Joy

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Joy is a conference speaker, team and leadership development consultant, customized trainer and facilitator and a Certified Professional Coach with expertise in personal career coaching, job offer and salary negotiations and leadership coaching.

As an Insights Discovery® licensed practitioner, Joy provides clients the added value of the Discovery® Portfolio of tools when working with individuals, teams, leaders and organizations to create inspiring visions for collaborative, cohesive teams to produce superior results.

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