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EXCELLENCE

*Motivate, Inspire and Grow Through Mentoring*

# Mentoring Matters

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## In This Issue

Make Some New Year's Resolutions

Making the Most of Your Mentoring Relationships

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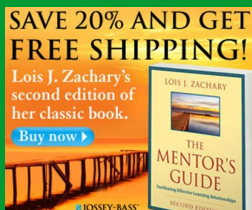
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## CHECK THIS OUT!



The Mentor's Guide:  
Facilitating Effective  
Learning Relationships,  
2nd edition

We also offer a Mentoring:  
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Here we are, once again, starting a new year and also celebrating [National Mentoring Month](#).

Organizations across the country are holding ceremonies, events, activities and programs to observe it, acknowledge the value of mentoring and celebrate mentoring success.

JANUARY 2012						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

[National Mentoring Month](#) offers a perfect opportunity to begin a new mentoring relationship, reflect on current and past mentoring relationships, celebrate lessons learned through mentoring, and make some New Year resolutions to enhance personal and organizational mentoring.

### Begin a Mentoring Relationship

If you've never been engaged in a mentoring relationship, now is the perfect time to get started. What can a good mentor help you achieve? Our research at Leadership Development Services reveals a wide variety of answers. Some people look for a safe haven where they can vent, and/or get candid feedback. Others seek a mentor as a sounding board to test out new ideas or to get the support that they need in their jobs, at school or in their organizations to manage priorities or improve their productivity that they might not get in their own institutions. Others tell us that their mentors were invaluable in helping them navigate the organization and learn about what works and what doesn't work. There are many other [compelling reasons](#) as well.

The start of a new year is the perfect time to think about your own reasons for engaging in mentoring. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Do I have a sincere interest in learning?
- Am I willing to work on my own growth and development?
- Am I willing to be open and honest with myself and another person?
- Am I willing to listen to critical feedback?
- Can I participate without adversely affecting my other responsibilities?
- Am I willing to commit time to developing and maintaining a mentoring relationship?

### Reflect on Your Mentoring Experiences

Mentoring is a reflective practice. A mentoring relationship is just as much about thinking as doing. The problem is that most of us just don't make the time to engage in reflection. As a result, we miss the



wisdom that comes from standing at the feet of our own experience and learning from it. Take the occasion of National Mentoring Month to heart and reflect on your mentoring relationships.

- What did you learn from your mentors?
- What were the most satisfying aspects of those relationships and what made them satisfying?
- What are the implications for you as a mentoring partner in the year ahead?
- How can you incorporate reflection as a learning tool into your mentoring interactions?

### Celebrate Lessons Learned

Now is an ideal time to celebrate what you are learning from your mentoring relationship. Whether you are a mentor or mentee it is important to communicate this information to your mentoring partner. It builds trust, reinforces the learning, consistently helps you keep your relationship on track. Mentors consistently tell us that they learn as much as their mentees in a mentoring relationship (and sometimes even more). If you are a mentee you may be reluctant but curious to know what your mentor is getting out of the relationship. Make time this month to have a lessons learned conversation and celebrate your learning!

- How are you celebrating mentoring this month?
- How are you acknowledging your mentoring partner?
- What are you doing to celebrate mentoring in your organization?

Gretchen's mentor, Guy, reads voraciously and is particularly fond of quoting one particular author. Last summer when Gretchen was on vacation she wandered into a stationery store. There was a whole wall of framed quotes. One was very familiar to her - Guy had referred to it as "his mantra." She bought the framed quote and put it away to save for the right time to present it to her mentor. Their January 2012 mentoring meeting seemed just the perfect time to present him with this gift as a way of saying thank you for all he had done to help her grow and develop as a leader.

## Make Some New Year's Resolutions!

Here are eight mentoring resolutions you might want to consider this year.

**1. [Reconnect with past mentors](#) who made a difference in your life and [thank them](#) for the wisdom that they shared with you.** Let them know you are thinking about them and how what you learned from them is making a difference for you.

*"Chandra, I am calling to let you know that I thought of you yesterday. I was in a meeting, and instead of sitting back and just listening, I stepped right in, summarized what I was hearing and put the question that nobody was asking right on the table. Say, you should have heard how engaged they were. It changed the whole tone of the meeting. And afterwards, everyone thanked me. I never would have had the courage to do that without you. I heard your voice in my head saying, 'what are you waiting for? Just do it!'"*



**2. Raise the bar on your own mentoring practice.** Whether you are a mentor or a mentee, it takes more than good intention to be a good mentoring partner. Mentoring isn't something you do out of your back pocket. It is a competency you can learn with time, willingness, experience and training. If you are an organizational leader you need to raise the bar on mentoring practice throughout your organization by setting the example.

- What mentoring skill, competency or practice do you need to get better at during this coming year?

**3. Keep a mentoring journal.** Making journal entries will help you stay focused on the work of mentoring. The world goes on in between mentoring conversations, and it is easy to get distracted. When you make regular time to write in a journal, it creates a continuous placeholder for where you are in the relationship. You may find, like so many of mentors and mentees we talk with, that including factual material (such as notes capturing the content of the conversation), reactions, feelings, and process notes will enrich your mentoring conversations and help you track your progress in achieving mentoring learning goals.

- How are you keeping track of where you are in your relationship?

**4. Stay in conversation.** We are all so busy these days that we seem to be in a constant chase of time. Don't let your mentoring interactions get reduced to transactions. Mentoring conversations are conversations of connection and they take time.

- Think about the best conversation you've ever had. Are your mentoring interactions merely transactional or do you truly engage in robust and meaningful conversations?



**5. Set two development goals for yourself.** We set goals for everything else we are doing these days - career goals, professional development goals, personal goals, staff development goals, faculty development goals, but, what about setting goals to develop in our roles as mentors and mentees? Surely there are some things we need to learn to get better at.

Henri told us that he was excited to be a mentor and had lots of things to share but he really wasn't a very good listener. He consciously decided to use mentoring as an opportunity to work on his listening skills and was going to use his journal and feedback from his mentee to make sure that he stayed on track.

**6. Make it a habit to keep learning about mentoring and current best practices.** More and more is being written about mentoring, especially in regard to [virtual mentoring](#) and [adult learning](#). Learning about best practices can only help you improve and get better results from your efforts. For example, you can sign up for mentoring newsletters, such as [Mike the Mentor's Mentoring for Change](#) newsletter, and become a member of the [Peer Resources Network](#) and gain access to the largest and most comprehensive peer, coach and mentor database in the world.

- When was the last time you read an article about mentoring?
- How recently have you participated in a mentoring workshop?
- What online mentoring communities are you part of?
- What [mentoring blogs](#) do you regularly visit?

**7. Look for opportunities to bring mentoring into your organization.** If you are an organizational leader, think about ways you can support informal as well as formal mentoring in your organization so that everyone has the knowledge that will help them engage productively in mentoring. Consider individual, group, virtual and reverse mentoring. Leaders need to be available to mentor and talk up the value of mentoring.

- In what ways are your leaders supporting time for mentoring?
- Is your organization a continuum of providing mentoring training and educational opportunities so that mentors and mentees can make the most of their mentoring experiences?

**8. Volunteer to be a mentor in your community.** There is no shortage of opportunity when it comes to helping others live a better life. Use the skills you've honed in developing yourself as a mentor and participate in a local program to give back to your community. For example, [Phoenix Youth at Risk](#), like many other nonprofits, has a number of structured mentoring programs that focuses on helping at-risk and homeless children and teens. Find a mentoring opportunity or locate a [Mentoring Partnership](#) near you.

**Wiley Learning Institute Presents:**  
**MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS**  
**An Online Workshop with Dr. Lois Zachary**  
**Tuesday, March 6, 2012 3:00pm - 4:30pm Eastern**



The critical process of mentoring is a reciprocal learning relationship in which mentor and mentee agree to a partnership and work collaboratively toward achieving mutually defined goals that develop a mentee's skills, abilities, knowledge, and thinking. Effective mentoring can help ensure personal and professional growth, enhanced student learning, a collegial department, or a successful succession plan. Whether you are a mentor or mentee in a formal or informal relationship-and most of us are both at some point in our careers-you need to use your time and energy to its greatest effect.

When you register for this workshop, you will receive a complimentary copy of *The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships, 2nd Edition* by Lois J. Zachary (a \$36 value).

Please register for this online workshop at: <http://wli.wiley.com/pg/pages/view/530>

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**A Note to Our Readers:**

We believe that leaders cannot be effective without a strong and ongoing commitment to mentoring excellence. This belief, our passion for mentoring excellence, and our extensive experience in the field with organizations led us to create the Center for Mentoring Excellence. At our virtual center, [www.centerformentoringexcellence.com](http://www.centerformentoringexcellence.com), you will find mentoring tools and resources, expert advice and a forum for sharing best mentoring practices. We hope that you will visit us there and let us know how we can continue to help you raise the bar on mentoring in your organization.