

What Makes a Great Mentor?

Choose your mentors wisely. I've been fortunate to have a number of valuable mentors in my life, people who have helped me professionally and personally in important ways. Each of my mentors was unique, but all possessed traits I believe common among effective mentors. Based on my history, discussions with senior attorneys about their experiences with mentors and extensive reading about the subject, I've drawn up a list of forty characteristics I believe the best mentors possess:

Great mentors are:

1. Principle centered
2. Trustworthy
3. Ethical
4. Role models
5. Committed
6. Patient
7. Understanding
8. Respectful
9. Responsive
10. Motivated
11. Talented
12. Enthusiastic
13. Energetic
14. Inspiring
15. Unselfish
16. Fair
17. Thoughtful
18. Encouragers
19. Upbeat
20. Storytellers
21. Fun
22. Able to identify strengths and weaknesses
23. Able to stretch their mentees
24. Both demanding and supportive
25. Straight forward and decisive
26. Even keeled and tempered
27. Willing to express gratitude for a job well done
28. Able to constructive feedback with the interest of the mentee at heart
29. Willingly to share knowledge, insights and ideas
30. Still learning themselves
31. Willing to let the mentee know him or her as a person
32. Able to clearly describe an assignment
33. Interested in people
34. Confident, yet humble
35. Good listeners

36. Open and accessible
37. Good communicators
38. Appreciative of the opportunities they have been given
39. Able to read and understand their mentees
40. Willing to give credit to others