

The Power of Empathy in Mentoring

Understanding Emotional Support and Empathy

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Introduction to Empathy

Empathy goes beyond "walking a mile in another's shoes," - it involves understanding others' experiences, finding an emotional connection and being responsive to others' feelings and experiences.

“Empathy is being open to imagining another person's experiences from their point of view and striving to find points of connection, not by presuming to feel the same but by trying to feel with, and be responsive to, the other person.”



and even respected by you.



Importance of Empathy in Mentoring

- **Meaningful Connections:** Empathy fosters trust and emotional safety. Allows them to feel comfortable and safe enough to be open to accepting help from us.
- **Effective Relationships:** Empathetic mentors create high-quality relationships with mentees, and the support you offer more likely to be welcomed and meaningful.
- **Positive Outcomes:** Mentees with empathetic mentors report feeling heard and understood, leading to better emotional and mental well-being.

Components of Empathy

- **Perspective Taking:**
 - “Decentering” from your own experiences - setting aside one’s own values, beliefs, and worldviews and centering the thoughts on the other person.
 - ABC Model: Acknowledging your own response, breathing deeply to ground ourselves and not let emotions overtake us. This helps to create space for curiosity about the mentee's experience.
- **Adaptability:**
 - Adjusting your approach based on the mentee’s needs and feedback.
 - Importance of being responsive to the evolving nature of the mentoring relationship.

Benefits of Empathy in Mentoring

Emotional Support: Mentees feel more valued and respected.

Improved Engagement: Empathetic interactions lead to higher mentee satisfaction and engagement.

Enhanced Learning: Empathy facilitates better understanding of the mentee's needs, making support more relevant.

Incorporating Empathy into Mentoring

- **Practice Active Listening:** Focus on truly understanding what the mentee is saying.
- **Use the ABC Model:** Acknowledge, Breathe, and be Curious.
- **Adapt Your Style:** Be willing to change your approach based on the mentee's responses and needs

What Not to Do

Assuming similar experiences means the same - don't overlay your experiences on your mentee

Thinking you "know best" - don't try and fix your mentee

Drowning in emotions - keeping one's own emotional responses in check

Blaming the parent(s)/family - extending empathy to mentee's family

Expecting to be "perfectly" empathic

Group Scenarios

It is your first visit and your mentee tells you he is shy. How do you show empathy?

You were late and your mentee said he/she were starting to freak out. How do you show empathy?

Your mentee mentioned they're worried they're not going to do well on their test later this afternoon because their mom and her boyfriend were up late fighting and your mentee couldn't sleep. How do you show empathy?

Additional Reading and Resources

