

Top 10 Questions to ask Mentors and Mentees

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Whether you're experienced or a first-timer, the beginning of a new mentorship relationship can be both exciting and nerve-wracking for both the mentee and mentor. We prepared a list of questions that mentors and mentees can ask one another to start laying the groundwork of the mentorship relationship! From asking about professional goals to discussing boundaries about disclosure, these questions will act as helpful talking points to encourage thoughtful conversations between mentor and mentee.

5 Questions for Mentees to ask Mentors

1. How do you differentiate between a mentorship and supervisory relationship?
 - a. Exploring the perceived similarities and differences between mentorship and supervision allows the mentor and mentee to collaboratively set the frame of the relationship. It may be helpful to address comfort and limits surrounding topics, such as self-disclosure and communication styles (e.g. formal/informal). Setting boundaries will allow the mentor and mentee to feel safe in the relationship.
2. Tell me about your professional and academic background.
 - a. The mentee can gain an understanding of the mentor's academic and professional backgrounds. This would provide an opportunity for further discussion regarding important points the mentee should consider as they move forward in their own professional and/or academic careers in geropsychology.
3. How are some ways that we can balance our personal and professional identities within this mentorship relationship?
 - a. A power differential exists within the mentorship relationship. Addressing this helps the mentor and mentee share comfort levels regarding setting boundaries for personal disclosure within the mentorship relationship.
4. What were some meaningful supervisory or mentorship experiences you have had?
 - a. The mentor and mentee can share past mentorship experiences that have positively impacted their growth, which may help them learn about each others' values (e.g., respect, openness to learning, inclusivity, etc.) in the context of mentorship. It may also help the mentee to hear about and learn from challenges that mentors have faced.
5. What are your expectations (e.g., time commitment, preferred communication methods, agenda setting) for our mentorship relationship?
 - a. Transparency and explicit communication can be a boon to the development of your mentorship relationship. By clarifying expectations, you can make the most of each interaction. Doing so can also help eliminate the anxious guessing game regarding general expectations for communication. Identifying expectations can also serve as a springboard for conversations on boundary-setting and work-life balance.

5 Questions for Mentors to ask Mentees

1. Tell me about your professional and academic background.
 - a. Developing an understanding of your mentee's background and experiences provides a compass for goal setting. Addressing values that influenced the decisions a mentee has made throughout their career may also be a helpful transition into the next question.
2. What specific goals do you have for your professional development?

- a. The mentor may begin generating possible ideas on how their expertise and experience can fit in with the mentee's goals. This may help the mentor tailor their advice to their mentee's professional goals and identify additional resources for their mentee. For some mentees, discussing or identifying goals may be stressful. If this is the case, it may be helpful if mentors shared goals previous mentees have worked on to serve as a reference point.
3. What are the top three specific challenges to achieving those goals?
 - a. Mentors can become aware of the obstacles the mentee is facing in their professional development. This can initiate a collaborative problem solving process to work through those obstacles.
4. How do you prefer to receive feedback and guidance?
 - a. The mentor can gain an understanding of the mentee's preferred communication style in order to build rapport and facilitate more effective interactions.
5. How do you envision your ideal work-life balance?
 - a. Mentees can communicate their values regarding work-life balance and initiate a conversation about how mentorship may fit into their lives in a way that upholds that balance.

While the start of any mentorship may have its hurdles, we hope these questions can provide a helpful framework for navigating those challenges for both mentors and mentees.