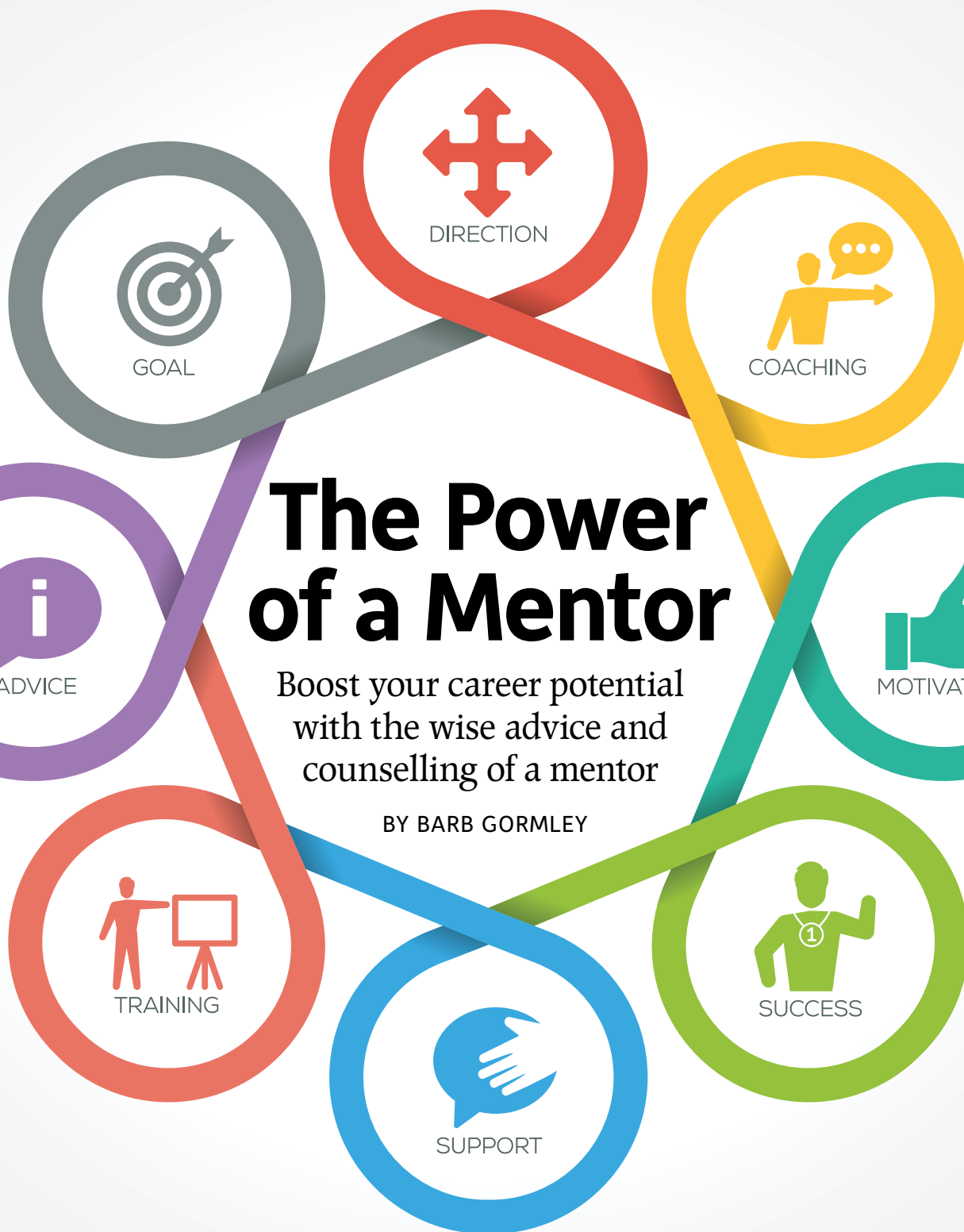




The Power of a Mentor

Boost your career potential
with the wise advice and
counselling of a mentor

BY BARB GORMLEY

Whether you're at the beginning, middle or end of your career, connecting with a mentor can change your work life in ways you may never have thought possible.

When you're at a phase of your career that requires the development of new knowledge, skills or attitudes, someone who is more established and better connected can offer crucial assistance.

Mentoring can take many different forms, ranging from regular face-to-face meetings arranged by a workplace mentoring program to informal relationships that people naturally and spontaneously develop throughout their careers.

On the other hand, experts agree that the roles of mentor and mentee are quite standardized and that the most successful mentor/mentee relationships result when there is a clear understanding of these roles:

The best mentees take responsibility for their own learning, approach each interaction with specific questions or even an agenda, have realistic expectations and are respectful of their mentor's time

The best mentors start the relationship with an informal needs assessment; set goals mutually; listen, then ask, then advise; and ensure that mentees make their own decisions. »



Get Connected

Futurpreneur Canada (futurpreneur.ca) is a national, non-profit organization that provides financing, mentoring and support tools to aspiring business owners aged 18-39. The program hand matches young entrepreneurs with a business expert from a network of more than 2,800 volunteer mentors.



When I discovered at my very first job that one of my responsibilities would be to teach group exercise classes and oversee the program I really panicked—I was a sporty outdoorsy type and had never instructed group fitness classes. Fortunately, at university I had briefly witnessed activity leader John Henderson teach a hugely popular “aerobics class” to students and staff. He was an up and coming star in the fitness industry who later went on to launch Activetics, a fitness resource company. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that he was the instructor for the Fitness Ontario Leadership Program that I had immediately registered for on getting the job. What a coincidence and a lucky break! Over the years I spoke with him on the phone, took other courses from him, purchased equipment, books, posters and resources from him. He was so wonderful to me and so inspiring and helpful.

When I later opened an aerobics studio, I met Joanne Witt (now McLean) at a meeting. She owned a similar studio in nearby, so we clicked immediately. Four

years later, she recommended me for a job. She was briefly my boss and then a colleague who I could always turn to for advice. I admired her for her fitness leadership skills and for her expertise as a manager, supporting and helping her staff to be our best. Later when she opened an executive coaching business, I took formal training from her which helped me envision how I could launch my current business.

Yet one more mentor, though I never met her, has been Jane Fonda. I bought copies of her first book, and my staff and students watched her then-revolutionary videos. I incorporated her ideas into my programming. She was a true role model for those of us who wanted a serious fitness workout. Today she is still influencing me: I regularly recommend her latest book, *Prime Time*, which encourages us to not see life as an arc, where at some point we are “over the hill,” but rather as a staircase that we are always ascending as healthy active adults.

Mandy Johnson
Active By Nature
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Communication Tip: Look Away to Connect

Rethinking the idea that eye contact is good

When talking with someone, we tend to look at their eyes to connect and to communicate key messages such as, "It's your turn to talk now" or "I agree/disagree," or to gauge or express an emotion, such as surprise, anger or joy.

No wonder then that when people first learn the Five-Minute Coach approach they can be surprised and discomfited by the prospect of using very minimal eye contact.

Think about those really productive conversations you've had when physically alongside someone—maybe in a car, train or plane or on a walk, where it's difficult to have eye-to-eye contact.

Your coachee's ability to develop their own goals or outcomes—and how they plan to achieve them—increases when they stop attending to whether you are engaged, have understood, have their full story and are hooked into finding a solution.

from *The 5-Minute Coach*

by Lynne Cooper and Mariette Castellino

When I graduated from university, I realized that I was lacking the practical fitness skills that college students were graduating with in a comparable program. I called Professor John Griffin at George Brown College in Toronto and asked him for advice regarding gaining some hands-on experience. He kindly suggested that I attend a big upcoming conference as a volunteer with some of his graduates. At the conference I mostly helped with set-up and lugged around equipment, but I also heard several presentations and then met the presenters—all big names in the corporate fitness world, including John Frittenburg, Veronica Marsden, Doug Cowan and Tom Love. These simple introductions opened the door to future relationships and even jobs with some of them later in my career.

Early on John Griffin suggested a course to improve my fitness assessment skills, and over the following years he provided continuous guidance and motivation. John Frittenburg later became my boss, and we worked together for 20 years. We met regularly for coaching, and I developed a multitude of skills on the job as I watched and admired how he operated.

The impact of the mentoring I received early in my career has really stayed with me, and it all started with one simple phone call.

George Dickson
HES Canada
Collingwood, Ontario

Reaping the Benefits: Get the most from the relationship

FOR MENTEES

- "Make it a give and take relationship. It doesn't take much. Just let your mentor know what a difference he or she is making to your career. Find little ways to support them. This is pretty easy to do these days with social media, for example."

Mandy Johnson

- "Volunteer or take a low-paying job at a fitness event to get involved with key influencers. But make it a two-way street by showing real interest and by researching and understanding your potential mentor. Don't be afraid to pick up the phone and contact people who you think might be able to answer your questions. People in the fitness field are usually happy to give advice and to help others."

George Dickson

FOR MENTORS

- One thing the best mentors do is to give energy and not take it, says Anthony Tjan in the *Harvard Business Review*. When a mentee comes with an off-the-wall or seemingly too ambitious idea, a skilled mentor sees everything good before seeing anything bad. If this is a challenge for you, Tjan suggests mastering the 24 x 3 rule: when you hear an idea for the first time, try to wait 24 seconds before saying or even thinking something negative; next, challenge yourself to wait for 24 minutes; and then work toward waiting 24 hours before pondering or verbalizing any cons.

- "The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves." Steven Spielberg

- "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." *Winston Churchill*

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