

# Mentoring Matters

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## Myth of the “Perfect Mentor

- The character, Mentor, in Homer’s epic poem, *The Odyssey*, is widely accepted as the namesake of the term *mentor*.
- Before leaving for the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusted guardianship of his household and his son, Telemachus, to his faithful friend, Mentor.
- in Homer’s original text, Mentor *did not* naturally exhibit the wise and nurturing behavior historically attributed to him; in fact, he was inept.
- Rather, it was the goddess Athena, known in Greek mythology for her wisdom and compassion who took Mentor’s form to guide and protect both Telemachus and Odysseus on their journeys.

## Mentoring Defined

- The process of forming, cultivating and maintaining mutually beneficial developmental relationships between one or more mentors and one or more protégés.

## Kram’s Mentoring Functions

- **Career Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance “learning the ropes” and supporting the individual’s career advancement and professional development.
  - Sponsorship
  - Exposure & Visibility
  - Coaching
  - Protection
  - Challenging Assignments
- **Psychosocial Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, perceptions of organization support and overall effectiveness in one’s professional role.
  - Role Modeling
  - Acceptance & Confirmation
  - Counseling
  - Friendship

## Mentoring Phases

- Initiation ⇔ Cultivation ⇔ Separation ⇔ Redefinition

## Mentoring Effectiveness

- Characteristics of the protégé/mentee impact willingness of an individual to be a mentor:
  - Individuals perceived as “high potential” are most likely to be selected as a protégé/mentee
- Structural aspects of relationships (type, frequency, duration) are weak and inconsistent predictors of mentoring behavior
  - No evidence for universal set of “mentoring styles” that significantly impact effectiveness

## Mentoring Outcomes

- Individuals who have mentors are more likely to be promoted, earn more money, are more likely to have a career plan, are happier with their work, and are more likely to become mentors themselves than those without mentoring experiences