
UCF Forum

6-4-2018

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STARS Citation

Peterson, Christal, "You Are Never Too Old For a Mentor" (2018). *UCF Forum*. 309.

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You Are Never Too Old For a Mentor

By **Cristal Peterson**
UCF Forum columnist
Wednesday, June 4, 2018

This may seem like a loaded statement – especially coming from someone who has only lived a quarter of a century – but it is true: No matter what chapter, phase or level you are in your life, you are never too old for a mentor.

A mentoring relationship is one in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person helps to guide a less-experienced or less-knowledgeable person. Pretty straightforward right?

Of course, but I think sometimes one of our problems as a society – especially millennials – is that when searching for a mentor we confuse more experience or more knowledge with titles. Just because someone may have a title, their experience and/or knowledge may not equate to what you need or are looking for in a mentor.

At many points in my life I did the same thing, but I have come to believe that that technique is doing a disservice to ourselves and those we call mentors. This should be transformational on both ends and not just for one.

Our mentors should not be looked at as someone who can fix all our professional and personal challenges or help us up the corporate ladder to our dream job.

They may be able to help alleviate those challenges but only by us taking into account their past and current knowledge of what it is that we are seeking to obtain from them in the long run. A lot of times the very thing we discover is not what was originally hoped to gain in the first place.

I have been blessed to have a lot of mentors in my life, some good, some bad, some current and some who came in and out of my life like seasons in the year. But one thing that they share is that they have all helped shaped me into the person I am today.

I am not a completed package and I do not know if I ever will be, but I know for sure that I am a work in progress, like we all are.

I lean on my mentors, intentional ones or not, to help me achieve the ultimate goal for my life, which is to positively impact those around me by empowering them to become the best version of themselves, while also being and remaining full myself.

In today's world, a good work-life balance may be as hard as finding a needle in a haystack, but that is one area I look for in a mentor: someone who is healthy mentally, physically and emotionally outside of their career, because what you are filled up with, you pour out onto others.

Be intentional on what gets poured into you, that it is something of substance and not just the watered-down stuff.

I have mentors that grew into being mentors through babysitting their children and I saw a glimpse at the fellowship they have with their children and one another in their marriage. Through this mentorship I am experiencing what a healthy marriage is, which in turn makes me strive to be compassionate, understanding, selfless, patient and so many other important characteristics that are foundations for any successful relationship –and I expect the same in return.

I have mentors that are some of my closest friends simply for the fact that we all have different stories, which means that we all have experience in situations that the others do not. Through the growth of our friendships and sharing our journeys, whenever I am confronted with a situation that I may not be able to handle or feel caught off guard, I use bits and pieces from what they did successfully in similar situations in hopes that a similar outcome happens for me – and hoping in return mine do the same for them.

“Teachable moments,” a mentor once told me.

That's what a mentorship is all about: building a genuine relationship by taking something you cannot feel or see, and building you up as a person. They challenge you in ways that through their knowledge, experience and interactions, lift you to your full potential.

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