

M ENTORING RELATIONSHIPS: 7 TIPS FOR COMING TO CLOSURE

The closure phase of the mentoring relationship presents the greatest challenge to individuals involved in the partnership. The reasons are many.

Often, closure is taught with anxiety and/or surprise. Even know closure may have been planned, relationships can and earlier than anticipated.

Sometimes partners hang on indefinitely, neither wanting to let go. It may be inertia, comfort, or desire not to offend they keeps a mentoring relationship afloat. More often not, particularly in a planned mentoring program, the specified and point of the relationship simply arrives as scheduled.

Although energy, training, and preparation go into building in maintaining stages, relatively little preparation is provided for the crucial end phase of the mentoring process. It is this short phase that offers the most opportunity for growth and reflection regardless of whether a relationship has been positive or not. If closure is to be a mutually satisfying learning experience, both partners must be prepared for it.

Assuming to much (or too little) to and not making the time to check out assumptions can make a big difference in the success in the coming to closure experience many mentoring partners disk that the inevitability of closure an even establish a no-fault conclusion early on in the negotiating phase of their relationship but rarely re-visit it when closure is at hand.

LACK OF CLOSURE

Individuals who have difficulty with relationship endings are those likely to have the most difficulty dealing with closure. They're usually some degree of the mode overlay that accompany if closure, be it discomfort, relief, fear of

separation, joy, or excitement.

The hardest part is just letting go. According to Jon Kabat-Zinn. "Letting go means just what it says. It's an invitation to cease clinging to anything to -- whether an idea, a thing, any event, a particular time or view or desire." It is particularly and when either partner knows how to or has had lack of experience in letting go. Another instance when lack of closure occurs is when mentoring partners become Fran interest into a more informal relationship based on the growing familiarity.

FEAR OF CLOSURE

Some the fear of her feeling and/or anxiety ending makes lack of closure the preferred situation.

☐ Example 1: Cynthia felt beholden to Fran and outcomes that of obligation, was afraid to "rock the boat" lest she hurt Fran feelings; therefore, closure was not an option. She preferred to let the relationship die a natural death and live the discomfort of obligatory niceness.

☐ Example 2: Greg never really felt in a connection to Art. He agreed to be a part of the mentoring program because it made him look good at work to have a protege. It was what people in his position did, "the professional thing to do." As time one on, maintaining the relationship became a chore. Rather than make waves, he, too, waited and waded through the pretense.

Things were not going well for either Cynthia or Fran nor Greg or Art. In both relationships, no one wanted to take action. No one was comfortable discussing closure, although all knew their relationship was a fiction and had already come to closure.

UNANTICIPATED ENDING

In many personal mentoring relationships, one or both partners move to a different location.

❑ Example 3: Sam and Gretchen were thrilled with their mentoring relationship and the enrichment it provided. One day Gretchen got a phone call from Sam telling her that he was being promoted to another division of the company, a promotion that meant his immediate relocation. Sam assured Gretchen that he would "try to stay in touch when everything settled down." Gretchen waited for two months, and then she finally called Sam and left a message on his voicemail. He never called her back.

❑ Example 4: For Mark, it was life's circumstance that caused him to pull back from everything but the basics at work. His spouse developed a life threatening illness, and it was all he could do to take care of her and do his job at work. Ken chose not to push closure and took Mark off the hook by finding himself another mentor.

Gretchen as feeling rejected and Ken disappointed. Both had clearly articulated their goals, and the unanticipated closure caught them by surprise. The lack of closure foreclosed an opportunity to learn, to grow and to celebrate.

CALENDAR CLOSURE

The comfort level in a mentoring relationship can so easily be perceived as friendship, especially when the chemistry and circumstance are right.

❑ Example 5: Frank and Bob's successful mentoring relationship lasted for two years, and then the calendar dictated the time for closure. Both attended the company picnic together an each

received a certificate from the company for their participation.

Without a continuing structure and formality of the program, any good intentions Frank and Bob might have had for closure fell by the wayside. They moved from mentoring partners to friendship without celebrating their good work together.

One, longtime mentor had this to say: "I'm always struck -- sometimes, a little sadly -- that however friendly in caring that mentoring relationship is, it is in fact very different from a friendship."

QUOTE

PERIODICALLY, CHECK OUT THE HEALTH OF THE RELATIONSHIP. MAKE SURE YOUR NEEDS AND THOSE OF YOUR PARTNER ARE BOTH BEING MET. DON'T WAIT FOR DERAILMENT.

REACTIVE AND PROACTIVE ANTICIPATING CLOSURE

Put all five examples having common is lack of pre-established agreement to discuss how to handle the normal inevitability of the situation -- even when a mentoring program has a calendar and an official rewarding of a certificate. If the mentoring partners in these examples had been more proactive rather than reactive, they could have avoided the doldrums, the "shoulds" and the downside -- the affective results of not letting go properly or officially.

Even healthy mentoring relationships don't go on indefinitely. At some point, they

and. It may be formal, predictable end, it may not. When closure is planned for, it is often easier, but still in present its own set of challenges.

There are number of things that mentoring partners can do to insure satisfying in meaningful closure:

1. Be proactive. Don't wait until the end to begin! Agree on how you will come to closure when you first negotiate your mentoring partnership. Discuss and plan how you will come to closure -- if it is planned or unplanned. Set ground ruled for having the discussion. Make one of those ground rules an agreement to end on good terms. Many mentoring partners adopt the no-fault rule, meaning that there is no blaming if the partnership is not working or one person is uncomfortable.

2. Look for signals. Keep your antenna off the say you can recognize signs that the relationship may be ending. Check out your perceptions and assumptions when the first indicators appear. The you think you see may be a reflection of your on anxiety, fear, or hope.

3. Respect your partner. If he or she wants to end the relationship and you don't, you must honor their wishes. You may want to leave the door open in case circumstances change. Time is the most frequent cause of mentoring partnership derailment. Being flexible but focus is helpful. Always get a date on the calendar. If you need to close on a meeting, do it, but make sure you schedule your next one when you do. Used wisely, a calendar reminder is a contact point for communication.

4. Evaluate the relationship. Periodically, check out the health of the relationship. Make sure your needs and those of your partner are both being met. Don't wait for derailment. Make ongoing evaluation a commitment along the pound to continuous improvement. Don't leave evaluation to chance to. Start on the right foot and check in regularly.

5. Review your goals. Regularly review your goals and objectives with your mentoring partner. Take stock and process learnings. Gauge where you and your partner are in the accomplishment of goals and objectives, it is time to celebrate and move on. If you chose to move on review what has worked for you and your partner and what had gotten in your way. Make it a point to rearticulate goals and renegotiate the terms if you chose to continue the relationship.

6. Integrate. When it is time to come to closure, ask how you can use what you've learned. Without closure, you lose the value-added dimension of integration. Good closure involves taking what you've learned from the mentoring relationship and applying it. What are the implications? What did you learn? Where do you go from here?

7. Never assume. Remember that there are two partners in the relationship. DO each of you know how the other feels? Be vocal in your appreciation of each other. Celebrate your accomplishments together.

COMING TO CLOSURE

The phrase "coming to closure" suggests a process. In the mentoring relationship, good closure is synonymous with learning and development. Good closure should catapult you forward into a new stage. Lack of closure or poor closure can impede growth.

Although individual a need for closure varies, closure is essential

for growth. Whether closure is anticipated or planned, dealing with it together and directly is critical for a successful mentoring relationship. Be important of the "closure conversation" cannot be over emphasized. It is during this conversation that learning takes place that appreciation gets articulated, and the celebration occurs. It is also the occasion for renegotiations: to determine it is relationship might continue, and if so on what basis.

A friend and I were discussing endings experienced in mentoring relationships. She likened her experience to an avalanche, in an avalanche, a large mass of snow, i.e., and debris slides down the mountain. After the avalanche cards its path, it fits for a time before it melts. As it dissipates, a large vacuum at the bottom of the mountain is created. It is tempting to fill this void quickly, but that void in there to teach us a lesson. This separation caused by its absent in the gets, any indication for growth and regeneration. Mentoring is not about feeling that void. It is an invitation to wisdom.

LOIS ZACHARY IS THE PRINCIPLE OF
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SERVICES IN
PHOENIX, ARIZONA. (602) 954-9934