

Mentoring Best Practices – Mentoring Across Differences

Individuals bring a wide range of different life experiences to their mentoring relationships. Three key principles can help mentors and mentees bridge these potential differences to create satisfying mentoring relationships.

Be aware of your own assumptions.

In the same way that others may have different points of view because of differences in their life experiences, you likely have been shaped by your gender, race, social class, education, generation, geography, and a multitude of other cultural influences. Increasing your awareness of the ways you are a product of your past can help you avoid assuming that others see the world in the same way.

Get curious about the experience of colleagues who have different life experiences.

Putting yourself in other people's shoes and seeking to understand how they may have come to their different points of view is a critical step in building a mentoring relationship.

Address differences openly.

Relationships in which it becomes comfortable to talk about and acknowledge differences have much greater potential value for both mentor and mentee. While it may initially feel uncomfortable to talk about topics such as race, gender, and/or socioeconomic background, the potential for increased understanding and connection makes it worth the risk.

Adapted with permission from the Institute for Clinical Research Education Mentoring Resources, University of Pittsburgh www.icre.pitt.edu/mentoring/overview.html and the Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute, Oregon Health & Science University <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring/>.