



LAWYER TO LAWYER MENTORING PROGRAM

Mentor Attorney Guide: Putting Your Training To Work

Thank you for your willingness to serve as a mentor for a beginning Tennessee lawyer! This guide will help you take the training you have received and apply it to your mentoring experience to improve that experience for both you and the beginning lawyer. First however, let's consider the most important question on your mind right now:

WIIFM?

“WIIFM” stands for “What's in it for me?” What? You thought we'd start off with some high-sounding rhetoric? Well, there might be some of that before we finish, but think about it from your beginning lawyer's perspective. Don't you think they are going to enjoy the mentoring relationship more and get more from it if they get signals from you that you are also benefiting from the experience? Who wants to feel like a drain and a burden to another? So, just as a reminder to yourself as you start out, why not jot down a note about why you want to be a mentor and what you hope to get from the experience? For ideas, see the bullet points below.

I'm looking forward to mentoring because:

- Friendship
- Opportunity to teach material I know and am interested in
- Giving back
- Insight into the new generation of lawyers
- Share in the excitement of a new lawyer finding his or her “style”
- Pride in new lawyer’s accomplishments
- Discover new things about myself
- See the profession – what’s right about it, and where we need to improve – through fresh eyes
- Get a chance to use strengths in new ways
- Learn some new things
- Never hurts to go back to the basics!



What does my beginning lawyer need?

Great question! You obviously understand that not all beginning lawyers need the same thing. Remember, 40-50% of graduating law students are experiencing significant levels of depression, almost half are not satisfied with how things are going in their career and about 40% would not choose law school if they had it to do over again.

What does this data mean for you as you begin mentoring your new lawyer? Pay attention! Don't assume you know where he or she is – you don't. Listen to what they say, and don't say, notice their energy and moods, and consider what they say they are most interested in from the mentoring relationship. Some will be looking primarily for practice tips, hints on marketing, and guidance in navigating organizations or professional relationships. Others may be more aware of deep concerns about whether they fit in law, or at least in the area they have chosen. In general, let the beginning lawyer guide the relationship. On the other hand, you're bringing experience and a different perspective – don't be afraid to push for conversations you think are important, even if your beginning lawyer may not see it that way right now!

What if I feel I'm in over my head?

Help for issues beyond your expertise (depression, alcoholism, etc.): TLAP! TLAP! TLAP!
Tennessee Lawyers Assistance Program, www.tlap.org, 615.741.3238, 877.424.8527 (toll free)

How can I get the most from the mentoring experience?

To help you get the most from your mentoring experience, we have provided several unique components in the worksheets to help you get the most from your relationship with your beginning lawyer.

Use the worksheets! The worksheets can guide your time together with a Beginning Lawyer. For example, each sheet suggests starting with each of you sharing a story about something that went well in your practice that week. This activity will get your time together off on a optimistic start and build positive emotions that can help foster creativity, collaboration and learning during the rest of the sessions.

Be appreciative and strengths-based! You learned about your strengths of character during training (and the list is still there for you if you've forgotten – either at www.authentichappiness.org or www.viacharacter.com). Your beginning lawyer will be encouraged to take the VIA Inventory of Strengths, also. Remember that pulling from those strengths often builds engagement, commitment, and optimism (and diminishes depression). So remember to pull on your strengths, and to notice and try to draw out the strengths of the Beginning Lawyer. When talking about challenges, look for what is working, even a little bit, and see if you can help the Beginning Lawyer find a way to build on those aspects of the situation.

Stories: Stories, of course, are fabulous teaching devices. For millennia, they were human



kind's only means for recording and transmitting wisdom. Think in advance about stories you might share with your Beginning Lawyer relevant to the topic of that worksheet. Remember, stories of your failures and shortcomings, and how you got through them, recovered from them, or otherwise "bounced back" may be even more helpful to your Beginning Lawyer than stories of your easy successes.

After Action Review: Finally, to help you develop as a mentor and leader, record "Sustains" and "Improves" for each session. What went well? How could you improve the chance for a good session the next time you discuss that topic with a Beginning Lawyer. By doing this after each session, you will not only be improving as a mentor, you will also be enhancing your general leadership skills.

Congratulations! And good luck!

We believe that your experience as a mentor can help you, the Beginning Lawyer you work with, and the profession. Congratulations on stepping up. Thank you for your leadership. And all the best to you as a Mentor Attorney!