



FUTURE & YOUNG PROFESSIONALS
TEXAS RECREATION & PARK SOCIETY

Mentorship Program



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Introduction

TRAPS Mentorship Program Code of Ethics

As a participant in the TRAPS Program, I agree to:

- Treat others within the Mentor Program with respect
- Put an honest effort and commit sufficient time towards each mentoring relationship established (recommended three (1-3) hours per month for mentors and mentees)
- Not promote goods or services from sources in which I have a financial or personal interest
- Not accept fees or commissions
- Represent oneself honestly
- Recognize the diversity of Mentor Program and respect the variety of cultural norms, beliefs, practices, and values it contains

Program Concept

TRAPS Mentorship Program

The program shall be called the TRAPS Mentorship Program. The program is a Mentee development program for emerging leaders, young parks and recreation directors (under 35), and students of parks, recreation and related fields. The purpose of the program is to provide each mentee with additional Mentee development opportunities that an effective membership program can offer. The program will have two levels of mentorships:

- Executive Professional/Young Professional
- Young Professional/Student

This manual provides guidelines and suggestions for beginning and maintaining a Mentor/Mentee relationship. The program is created to help all Parks and Recreation Mentees and is meant to complement the career counseling relationship an employee may have with their supervisor. It is not intended to replace any of the formal or informal counseling/mentoring relationships that already exist within or outside a person's place of employment. As a matter of course, TRAPS encourages Mentee's to develop several informal mentor/mentee relationships throughout their careers as a means to nurture and foster the park and recreation profession.

Oversight:

- The program will be managed by a Mentorship Committee of the F&YP Branch
- The Members of the F&YP shall select a Professional Development Rep, which will serve as the Chair of the Mentorship Program.
- The Chair shall work with TRAPS to facilitate their representatives on the Committee.
- The Committee shall have the responsibility to implement and oversee the program.

- The committee shall also work with the TRAPS and YP Branch to provide input on other mentorship opportunities and how all programs can be related.

When possible, all regions of TRAPS will have a representative on the Mentorship committee.

Benefits of a Mentorship Program:

A successful mentor program provides opportunities for mentees including:

- Unique and personal access with a prominent parks and recreation professional on a one on one basis.
- Explore work through interactions with Mentors in the parks and recreation career of their choice.
- Gain an experienced practitioner's perspective on career situations.
- Identify and plan short term and long-term development career plan with the assistance of a successful Mentor.
- Heighten awareness of the career opportunities in the parks and recreation field.
- Realize the value of networking.
- Develop a meaningful Mentor/Mentee relationship over a specified period of time.

A mentor program benefits the Profession by allowing participants to:

- Contribute to the development of Mentees
- Assist Mentees in beginning or advancing careers
- Give back to the Profession

Eligibility

Mentees must:

- Be member of TRAPS.
- Have a position (part time or full time) or be a student in the parks and recreation field.
- Complete and submit a Mentee application.

Mentors must:

- Be members of TRAPS.
- Be willing to commit to the Mentorship program for at least one year and for a minimum of two hours per month.
- Complete and submit a Mentor application.

Program Procedures

Promotion of the program

- All TRAPS Mentor committee members are required to be a Mentor.
- All Mentor committee members will reach out to five (5) fellow TRAPS members to solicit their participation in the program.
- The Mentor Committee Chair will work with the representatives of the TRAPS Board to further promote the program to their membership to recruit mentors and mentees.

Application process

- Application will be available on the TRAPS website.
- Enrollment will occur during the open recruitment of the program.
- After the end of the recruitment period, all applications will be reviewed by the committee and matched.

Matching Mentors with Mentees

- Matching mentors with mentees will be based on such factors as: mutual areas of professional interest, schedules, geographic proximity, etc.
- Interviews or follow up calls by the committee may occur with mentors or mentees to clarify areas of interest and commitment level of participants.
- Assignment will be made by the committee and information will be sent out to each mentor and mentee.
- A date by which mentors and mentees should make contact will be established annually. This will mark the beginning of the mentorship process.

Monitoring the program

This will be the primary role of the Professional Development Chair

One of the key components will be the monitoring and evaluation of the program. This will include:

- Follow up with participants to ensure that mentors and mentees have been contacted.
- Conduct periodic group meetings throughout the program including sharing of information and ways to improve.
- Request a written summary of the mentor experience from all mentees.
- Conduct year end group meetings to discuss way to improve the program.

Evaluation of the program

- All participants shall complete an evaluation at the mid-way point and end of the program.
- All input shall be referred to the Committee.
- The Committee Chair shall provide a final report to the TRAPS Board at the end of the mentor year.

Switching Mentors/Mentees

- If a mentor or a mentee no longer feels comfortable with their match, they should direct their comments to the Chair of the Mentorship Committee. The Chair will first attempt to work with the respective Mentor/Mentee to identify how to make the match work. If unsuccessful, the Chair will work to find a new mentor for the mentee and vice versa.

Mentor Program Timeline

September

Solicitation of mentors and mentees

October

Deadline for applications is October 15

Committee reviews applications and matches mentors with mentees

November

Announcement of Mentor/Mentee Pair

January

Follow up emails/phone calls to Mentor/Mentee pairs by committee members

February/March

In-person meeting at TRAPS Institute

April

Follow up emails/phone calls to Mentor/Mentee pairs by committee members

September

Mentor/Mentee evaluations submitted

Mentor Committee to make revisions the Mentor Program

Program Expectations

Mentors

As a mentor within the TRAPS Program, I agree to:

- Not use any ideas, products, or materials that a mentee has, or may develop, to further my business or financial interests; and maintain the confidentiality of all ideas, products, or materials that have been entrusted to me by my mentee.
- Encourage my mentee to maintain the highest ethical standards.
- Maintain a high standard of personal and professional conduct with my mentee.
 - Always communicate in a truthful manner
 - Support the goals of my mentee
 - Avoid the intent or appearance of unethical or compromising practice in relationships, actions and communications
 - Accept only assignments for which I am qualified by my experience and competence
 - Immediately acknowledge any influences on my objectivity to my mentee
 - Refer my mentee to other professionals for issues or questions for which I feel unqualified

Mentees

As a mentee within the TRAPS Program, I agree to:

- Maintain the confidentiality of my mentoring relationships.
- Communicate regularly and openly with my mentor.
- Honor my commitment to my mentor.
- Complete any tasks agreed upon between my mentor and myself.
- Hold all sensitive information provided through my Mentor relationship in strict confidence.

Roles of Mentors

Your role as a mentor is to be a resource to the Mentee in the relationship. You need to foster a trusting and open relationship that allows you to give direction and feedback when needed, assist in career development, and be a confidential sounding board. Mentoring is a two-way street, and requires that you commit to the relationship.

Mentor Guidelines

- Be positive and honest.
- Respect the Mentee you are mentoring. Never make them feel foolish for asking a question.
- Be perceived as approachable and available.
- Get to know your “Mentee” on a professional level.
- Provide guidance on career development.
- Make your role as a mentor a high priority.
- Share our experiences and tell your stories – personal scenarios offer valuable, and often unforgettable, insight.

- Share your failures and successes – both types of stories are powerful lessons that provide valuable opportunities for learning.
- Ask questions that make the Mentee you are mentoring think - good questions require comparison, evaluation and reflection.
- Ask questions. What does the Mentee you are mentoring think about his/her career? How would he/she like for you to help him/her? What expectations does he/she have of you?
- Support and praise the mentored when the situation merits support and praise.
- Encourage two-way feedback. Periodically assess the mentoring relationship. Is it giving each of you what you anticipated in the teaching relationship? Offer positive and constructive feedback on the relationship.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know but I'll follow up and get back to you."

Roles of Mentee

As a Mentee, you have a wonderful opportunity to benefit from the experiences of your mentor. Your mentor is there to provide support, direction, and feedback. But don't forget that you have a responsibility for this relationship and what you get out of it. Be proactive in fostering the relationship with your mentor and don't always wait for him/her to contact you.

Mentee Guidelines

- Be proactive.
- Understand the significance of this Mentee relationship. It is a two-way exchange and you must be willing to give information and support.
- Be positive, honest, and open.
- Accept advice graciously but make your own decisions. Only you know what is truly best for you.
- Take responsibility for managing your career.
- Demonstrate confidence. Your knowledge, skills and abilities provide valuable input to the relationship. Your mentor can gain just as much from you as you can from your mentor.
- Be dependable, responsible, and prepared for mentoring discussions.
- Ask questions – even the ones you are hesitant to ask. Your mentor is there to provide support and act as a provider of information.
- Respect your mentor. Their experiences can help you make the most of your own experiences.
- Confide in your mentor and respect the confidentiality of mentoring discussions.
- Be honest, open and sincere with your concerns. Your mentor may share information with you that they may not otherwise share outside of the relationship; be conscious of this and do not share information publicly that was shared within the mentoring relationship.
- Share your perspectives on life at your level. This will help your mentor keep in touch with people outside of their world of existence.
- Challenge and help your mentor to succeed as a mentor.
- Take responsibility for initiating and maintaining contact with your mentor.

Program Considerations

Before You Begin...A Message to Mentors

Mentors, you've been selected.

- Proactively participate in the program - it's important to help develop others in this profession.
- Get to know the person you are mentoring and understand what his/her goals are for the program.
- Share your knowledge and experiences with the person you are mentoring.
- Have fun, network, and learn from the relationship.

Mentoring Preparation

These questions will help you prepare for your first mentor meeting. Complete these questions and begin thinking about your goals and expectations of the relationship.

- 1)
- 2) What outcomes do you most want from the relationship?
- 3) What do you need to do as the mentor to make this work?
- 4) What are some features of my job that I like best? That I like least?
- 5) What are my major accomplishments since I started the position I am in?
- 6) How can I best help my Mentee?
- 7) What have I done for my personal and Mentee development?
- 8) What one thing do I wish someone had told me when I was at the level of the Mentee?
- 9) What does it take to be successful in the park and recreation career?
- 10) Describe your perception of the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and the mentee.
- 11) How did you first get involved in the Mentee associations?
- 12) How did you get involved in any affiliate you might have worked with?
- 13) How did volunteerism in these organizations help you nurture your career?
- 14) What were some of the more valuable lessons you learned from these acts of volunteerism?
- 15) Who was a mentor for you in your early years in the field? If you have a mentor now, who is it?
- 16) Why have you stayed in the park and recreation career?

Before You Begin...A Message to Mentee

Mentee, you've volunteered to participate:

- Proactively participate in the program – you have so much to gain.
- Get to know your mentor and share with him/her your goals and objectives of the program.
- Take responsibility for your career and personal growth.
- Have fun, network, learn from the relationship, and learn how to be a good mentor for others.

Mentee Preparation

These questions are designed to stimulate your thinking and to help you prepare for your meeting with your mentor. Think about your personal and Mentee development plan and what you can do to help nurture this plan. Considerations you can think about include how you can contribute to the profession as a volunteer and what you can do to enhance career growth and development for yourself. It is recommended that you complete these questions and use this form as an outline for your first mentoring meeting.

- 1) What do I consider the important competencies that my job requires?
- 2) What are some aspects of my job that I like best? That I like least?
- 3) What are my major accomplishments since joining the organization? Since last year?
- 4) In what areas do I need to improve over the next three months?
- 5) In what areas of responsibility in my job do I feel I need more experience and training?
- 6) What have I done for my personal development for me?
- 7) What have I done to enhance the development of others?
- 8) What are my long-range plans? What type of work do I see myself doing five years from now? How am I preparing myself for this work?
- 9) How can I get involved in the professional associations?
- 10) Describe your perception of the roles and responsibilities of both you and the mentor.
- 11) What specifically do you hope to learn from this mentoring relationship?
- 12) What do you hope to contribute to the mentor from this relationship?

Getting Acquainted

	Topic	Discussion Items
Month 1	Introduction & Program Goals	• Share career path to this point • Discuss expectations for program and set goals • Determine best method of communication
Month 2	Career Planning	• In-depth discussion of mentor's history • Discuss 5-10 year plans for each member • Discuss skills/experience necessary for success
Month 3	Organizational Values	• Examine why it is important to have values/missions • Discuss the values/missions of current organizations • Strategies for communicating to staff/community
Month 4	Diversity & Equity	• Role of diversity/equity in our industry • Discuss how current organizations address these • Strategies for implementation
Month 5	Work/Life Balance	• Discuss the challenges in achieving work/life balance • Share personal hobbies outside of work • Create a plan for professional success that allows for continued personal/family life
Month 6	Professional Networking	• Discuss the value of forming a professional network • Identify opportunities for meeting other professionals • Strategies for establishing and utilizing these relationships
Month 7	6 Month Evaluation	• Evaluate current progress on program goals • Discuss successes and possible improvements • Make any necessary adjustments to program goals
Month 8	Leadership	• Discuss the importance of leadership and traits • Current challenges in your current roles • How to improve leadership skills
Month 9	Teamwork	• Discuss what successful teamwork means • Share current organizational challenges • Examine different methods of team settings
Month 10	Conflict Resolution	• Share examples of past situations and resolutions • Role-play through various scenarios • Discuss how to effectively mediate various personalities
Month 11	Seeking Opportunities	• Analyzing a job description, researching an organization • Review of resume, cover letter, etc. • Mock interviews, personal presentation, etc.
Month 12	Upcoming Professional Challenges	• Discuss issues faced over the year, and things learned • Examine what challenges will arise in the near future • Explore any other topics not covered throughout the year
Year 2	Full Evaluation	• Evaluate the year • Discuss successes and possible improvements • Determine communication moving forward

First Meeting Agenda

This worksheet provides a topic agenda for your first Mentee/Mentor meeting. It is suggested that your initial meeting focus on defining your relationship by discussing roles and responsibilities, expectations, needs and goals. The first meeting sets the tone for the teaching/learning relationship. This tool will help you plan and prepare.

Review the meeting agenda; prepare necessary notes and use as a discussion outline.

Before the Meeting:

- Complete your preparation planning worksheets.
- Review the First Meeting Agenda.
- Attend to necessary logistics (schedule time, advance notice and no telephone interruptions).

During the Meeting

- Getting acquainted
- Review the agenda to determine desired outcomes of the meeting.
- Discuss expectations, roles, responsibilities and needs.
- Record decisions and outcomes.
- Discuss what went well and what improvements can be made for your next meeting.
- Schedule next meeting (not more than 30 days is suggested).

After the Meeting:

- Review objectives that were accomplished.
- Determine future meeting topics.
- Summarize meeting results and next steps.

Discussion Questions for Mentoring Meetings

Below are some helpful questions and topic ideas for you to use during your mentoring meetings.

Getting Acquainted – Questions to ask your Mentor:

- 1) How did you get to where you are in your career and can you describe your struggles and achievements along the way?
- 2) What are your professional needs and goals?
- 3) Do you have three words of advice you can offer me so that I can continue to progress within the career?
- 4) What are the most valuable lessons you have learned during your career? How might I apply it to my career?
- 5) What skills do I need to nurture that will help me to be extraordinary in my current job?
- 6) What issues do I need to focus on that would help me understand the direction of my career?
- 7) What is the best way for me to connect to the community I serve without usurping the authority of the administrators who I report to? • What are some political

difficulties that I can learn to avoid that will enhance my effectiveness in the community I serve?

- 8) Who would be the most effective people I need to associate myself with to improve the opportunity for advancement in the career?
- 9) Considering my goals, what can I do to expand my skill base?
- 10) Any ideas on how I can independently assess my true career potential?

Volunteerism and Building Professional Relationships:

- How do I cultivate successful relationships in TRAPS, NRPA other organizations?
- What can I do to network in an effort to develop more contacts?
- What communication skills are critical for effectively dealing with people in my work and the park and recreation career?
- What value is volunteerism with TRAPS, NRPA other organizations?
- What areas of involvement in these organizations would you recommend to me?

Balancing Your Personal and Professional Life:

- The hours I work make it challenging to have personal time outside of work. Do you have any helpful suggestions?
- I'm working for a difficult individual who doesn't share the same personal priorities that I have. Do you have any suggestions?
- Any creative solutions for balancing my personal life with work?

Mentoring Behaviors to Practice- in Cases Where the Mentee is Having Difficulty on the Job

The following are tips on how to be an effective mentor under these circumstances:

Listening

Listening may be the premier art of coaching. When the Mentee has a problem, providing a respectful, listening ear and serving as a sounding board may be all that is needed to help. Respectful listening means actively hearing what they are saying about her/his problem without inserting your own opinion. When this occurs, it gives them the opportunity to "think aloud", articulate the problem and various options, and achieve the emotional release they need. Careful listening will help them accept ownership and responsibility of his/her problem. They may often find the needed decision on how to solve the problem from thinking out loud. They will also have pride and satisfaction of having solved the problem on his/her own.

Feedback

When the Mentee explains a problem to you, his/her explanation will contain both facts and feelings. By listening carefully to discern the feelings involved and providing feedback to them on what you're hearing, in terms of the facts and feelings, you will let them know that you not only heard them, but you understand. This helps the Mentee feel that they are not alone with the problem. By allowing them to flood their feelings, he/she can move on to exploring options and working on a solution. After they have worked through their feelings ready to explore options, they may be ready for you to share information or personal insights.

Productive Confrontation

At some point, you may wish to confront the attitude, behavior or plans of the Mentee. It is extremely important to avoid criticism, which may result in resistance or harm his/her self-esteem.

Communication specialists recommend using an “I” message confrontation as the most effective way to bring about beneficial change. This approach can be effective because it allows your participant to make his/her own decision based on additional information that you provide.

The “I” approach is made up of three parts:

- Start with a neutral description of what you perceive that our Mentee intends.
- Indicate the possible negative consequences that you anticipate as a result of his/her intention.
- Note the feelings or emotions you are experiencing about the Mentee’s plan.

Example: Your participant has stated that he/she is planning to “have it out” with a manager who has been giving him/her problems. “I” confrontation response: “I’m concerned that you are going to have a major confrontation with (_____) and that this will result in a serious disruption to your working relationship and could be damaging to your career.”

Context Shifting

An important way that you may be able to help the Mentee is to assist them to see him/herself in a broader, more self-actualizing, positive light. By helping them to shift his/her self-image or shift the paradigm he/she has of a particular situation, you may be able to help him/her shift the mental context from today’s problems to tomorrow’s success.

Confidentiality

The foundation to building trust between the mentor/Mentee is the belief that the exchange of information will remain between the mentor/Mentee. However, when a mentor or Mentee demonstrates through his/her actions, words or gestures the physical or psychological threat to the other Mentee, it is the receiver’s responsibility to report the threat to the appropriate authorities.

Managing Your Relationship

Leading by Example – Being an Effective Mentor Model

“More is caught than taught.”

“People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

Have Integrity

- Do you do what you say you’ll do?
- Do you live according to the values and principles you verbally espouse?
- Would you be ashamed if people really knew you?
- Do you keep your commitments?
- Can the following people depend on you? Boss? Peers? Subordinates? Family? Friends?
- When was the last time you apologized to someone for a mistake or offense?

Be Competent

- Do you understand and communicate the overall business objectives driving projects?
- Do you understand the park and recreation industry and the issues affecting the career?
- Do you possess the technical knowledge and skills necessary for you to perform effectively?
- How would you assess your project management skills?
- How are your people skills? Do you relate with concern, respect and effectiveness?
- In general, do people like working for and with you?

Balance Personal and Professional Priorities

- Does work fit into your life or does life fit into work?
- Is your family life suffering as a result of your Professional life?
- Do you know your limits?
- Do you effectively set boundaries and keep them?
- How much time per week do you spend developing personal friendships?
- When was the last time you respectfully told your boss, “no”?

Care About People and Demonstrate This

- Do you listen and ask questions with the goal to understand and get to know others?
- Are you willing to consider others’ input and perspectives even if they are less experienced?
- Do you give people warning before asking them to work overtime?
- Do you consider your team’s schedule before accepting additional unplanned work?
- When was the last time you asked a co-worker a question about his/her personal life?
- Do you treat a supervisor or a part-time employee with the same respect as a board member?
- Do you ever look for opportunities to help others even when it’s not your responsibility?
- When is the last time you gave someone a praise or compliment?
- Take the Initiative
- Do you ask others to do things you wouldn’t do yourself?
- Do you often take the first step in relationships or in opening up?

Make Yourself Accountable

- Do you ask for help?
- Do you share your goals, struggles, and progress with others and let them help you?
- Do you welcome feedback?
- When was the last time a co-worker or friend told you something that was difficult for you to hear? How did you respond?

Mentoring Behaviors to Avoid**Below are tips of items to avoid in a mentoring relationship:**

Offering Advice – Offering advice shifts responsibility for constructive decision making from the Mentee to the mentor. If the mentor offers advice, it curtails personal growth by the Mentee. The advice carries the subliminal message the “You’re not able to solve the problem on your own, so I can do it for you by telling you what I think”. It infers that you have superior knowledge or insight into the problem, when the Mentee is actually the one who has the personal experience of the problem at hand. Effective

mentors share, model and teach; they do not take over problems.

As a mentor, you can best help the Mentee you are mentoring by:

- Listening carefully as he/she describes the problem.
- Confirm the emotions you hear him/her express to indicate that you have not only heard them, but that you understand the deeper, emotional nature of his/her difficulty.
- Provide ideas or information, when he/she asks, which he/she can use to develop his/her own solution.

Criticizing

Research has shown that there is no such thing as constructive criticism. By definition, criticism is evaluative and judgmental and usually perceived as threatening. People resist listening to criticism in response to the basic need for survival and security. Criticism damages self-esteem. Rather, your Mentee can benefit from your assistance in helping him/her explore where a course of action may lead or provide a new analysis of problems. You may help to define the gap between what is and what is needed. The gap needs to be defined in neutral, non-evaluative terms. Closing the gap needs to be viewed as something to be accomplished.

Building Barriers

Mentors have the potential of building barriers between themselves and the Mentee without intending to and without realizing the barriers have been created.

Rescuing

If a person recognizes the cause of his/her mistake and utilizes that information to make better decisions in the future, growth can occur. Rescuing, however, has to do with trying to help someone who has established a pattern of mistakes. If a person's mistakes are driven by a repetitive pattern, such as driving too fast, rescuing them will only encourage them to continue the same behavior. A good example of this may be seen with parents who constantly rescue their children from the consequences of their actions. When dysfunctional behavior patterns appear to persist, it may be helpful for you to point out the patterns to the Mentee and use counseling skills to help him/her break the pattern.

Mentee Behavior

This program is designed to encourage a free exchange of ideas in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. They will promote the development of Mentee relationships between mentors and Mentee. Any abusive attitude, language, or conduct is to be avoided at all costs.

Sources: Shea, Gordon, (1994). Mentoring: Helping employees reach their potential. New York, NY: AMA Membership Publications Division
Shea, Gordon, (1992). Mentoring: A practical guide. Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publications.
Homewood Flossmoor Park District Personnel Policy Manual

Summary of the 16 Laws of Mentoring

- 1) The Law of Positive Environment - Create a positive environment where potential and motivation are released and options discussed.
- 2) The Law of Developing Character - Nurture a positive character by helping to develop not just talent, but a wealth of mental and ethical traits.
- 3) The Law of Independence - Promote autonomy; make the Mentee independent of you, not dependent on you.
- 4) The Law of Limited Responsibility - Be responsible to them, not for them.
- 5) The Law of Shared Mistakes - Share your failures as well as your successes.
- 6) The Law of Planned Objectives - Prepare specific objectives for your relationship.
- 7) The Law of Inspection - Monitor, reviews, critique, and discuss potential actions. Do not just expect performance without inspection.
- 8) The Law of Tough Love - The participants acknowledge the need to encourage independence in the Mentee.
- 9) The Law of Small Successes - Use a stepping-stone process to build on accomplishments and achieve great success.
- 10) The Law of Direction - It is important to teach by giving options as well as direction.
- 11) The Laws of Risk - A mentor should be aware that a Mentee's failure may reflect back upon him. A Mentee should realize that a mentor's advice will not always work.
- 12) The Law of Mutual Protection - Commit to cover each other's backs. Maintain privacy. Protect integrity, character, and the pearls of wisdom you have shared with one another.
- 13) The Law of Communication - The mentor and the Mentee must balance listening with delivering information.
- 14) The Law of Extended Commitment - The mentoring relationship extends beyond the typical 9-to-5 business day and/or traditional workplace role or position.
- 15) The Law of Life Transition - As a mentor, when you help a Mentee enter the next stage of his life or career, you will enter the next stage of yours.
- 16) The Law of Fun - Make mentoring a wonderful experience laugh, smile, and enjoy the process.

Problem Area

The author's main area of concern is that most people have never learned how to be a good listener. Our educational institutions teach us how to speak, spell, and write, but they don't teach us how to listen. This seems odd, since about 40% of our communication time with others is spent listening. However, listening is a skill, and thus, can be learned. She sets out to show that acquiring this skill is crucial to our interpersonal relationships.

Good listening skills can result in the following benefits:

- Improved communication with other people.
- Reduced misunderstandings.
- Fewer mistakes (some may be costly!).
- Fewer quarrels between friends and family, etc.

The author uses research, experience, life experiences of others, and self-study exercises to help make her book easy to read, convincing and practical. She argued convincingly that most people are ineffective listeners even though listening is the biggest channel for learning and the biggest part of communication. She distinguished between 3 levels of listening and helped her readers understand and practice “level 1,” or “empathic” listening.

Helpfulness

We appreciated her clear explanations and practical examples from the work environment. She helped heighten our awareness of the importance of effective listening and how poorly we often listen in business and in other relationships. She offered tips to practice when listening and when speaking that will be very helpful to us as we try to communicate effectively.

When listening, we want to remember the following:

- Summarize (internally and verbally back to the speaker) and confirm understanding
- Concentrate; focus on the main ideas, don't get lost in the details, and resist distractions
- Keep an open mind and don't be defensive; don't formulate a rebuttal while listening
- Do not judge or refute right away, jot down questions and seek to understand fully
- Be vocally attentive
- Do not give advice right away, let the other person suggest her own solution
- Take initiative and get interested; take advantage of the opportunity to learn
- Be aware of emotions and hot buttons; these may make empathic listening difficult
- Use supportive and not suppressive language
- Focus on intent and meaning; evaluate the content and not the words or delivery
- Take brief but meaningful notes
- Check non-verbal signals

When speaking, we want to remember the following:

- Make eye contact
- Know what you want to say (plan it if possible) and be concise and specific
- Know the listener
- Gain favorable attention and encourage feedback
- Secure understanding and aid retention
- Give nonjudgmental positive feedback rather than general judgments
- Speak in terms of how I feel and don't blame the other person; take responsibility

Sources Cited:

Madelyn Burley-Allen (1982). Listening: The Forgotten Skill – A Self-Teaching Guide. New York, NY. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2nd Ed.

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Wickman, Floyd & Sjodin, Terri, (1997). Mentoring. Chicago, IL: Irwin Mentee Publishing