

Mastering Millennial Mentoring

Generation gaps between teacher and learner are encountered every 10-20 years. Generations are shaped by unique historical circumstances. Currently, millennials make up approximately 25 % of our workforce and this will increase to 40% and 75% of the workforce in 2020 and 2025 (1). Adapting to changes in expectations and work habits is imperative to educating learners, preparing future master educators and fostering productive mentoring relationships.

Millennials are frequently labeled to be distracted, impatient, entitled and too engaged in social media and not infrequently found to be on personal device during moments of teaching. These labels are often misguided. This generational cohort has been dubbed the “digital natives” with most of their lives accompanied by rapid expansion in technologies, having information and instant communication at their fingertips within seconds. The millennials have been characterized to appreciate honesty, instant feedback and collaboration. (2)

Here are some tips when mentoring millennials:

Tip	What they desire	How you deliver
Micromentoring	accessibility, frequent short meetings, fast responses	Hold brief meetings on narrow topics to discuss progress. Meetings would be about a single topic with a focused question or set of questions to be addressed.
Reverse mentoring	flat leadership structure	Find strengths of the mentee, perhaps social media as a means of disseminating research, journal club and networking, harness and promote their unique leadership abilities
Mentorship teams	collaboration	A team of mentors, interdisciplinary, providing cognitive diversity and the ability to capitalize on the individuals strengths

Adapted from Chopra V^{1,2}, Arora VM³, Saint S^{1,2}. Will You Be My Mentor?-Four Archetypes to Help Mentees Succeed in Academic Medicine. JAMA Intern Med. 2018 Feb 1;178(2):175-176

Finally, the millennial generation has been shaped by the #metoo era. I agree with the author in JAMA, Mentoring in the Era of #MeToo, with her fears of gender-based neglect. I most certainly harbor a great amount of empathy for those women who have suffered from sexual harassment and sometimes worse. However, many of my mentors have been male and have professionally influenced my practice and career path and are close colleagues of mine, likely for life.

The author refers to key behaviors exhibited by her male mentors:

- Always demonstrate exemplary professional behavior during and outside of the work day (never compromised by alcohol consumption or flirtatious interactions)
- Behave comfortably, but as if others are watching, demonstrating integrity
- Refrain from physical touch except in larger social settings where you may give a hug in greeting.
- Never mention anything about appearance or appearance of others and avoid generalizing comments about gender
- Text with important or urgent things, and sometimes just very funny things, but never anything that wouldn't share with either spouses.
- Most importantly, they have chosen to speak up to support women while other men have chosen to sit quietly or, worse, offend (4)

References

1. Waljee JF¹, Chopra V², Saint S³. Mentoring Millennials. JAMA. 2018 Apr 17;319(15):1547-1548
2. Williams VN¹, Medina J², Medina A³, Clifton S⁴. Bridging the Millennial generation Expectation Gap: Perspectives and Strategies for Physician and Interprofessional Faculty. Am J Med Sci. 2017 Feb;353(2):109-115
3. Chopra V^{1,2}, Arora VM³, Saint S^{1,2}. Will You Be My Mentor?-Four Archetypes to Help Mentees Succeed in Academic Medicine. JAMA Intern Med. 2018 Feb 1;178(2):175-176
4. Byerley JS. Mentoring in the Era of #MeToo. JAMA. 2018;319(12):1199-1200