

**OR leadership**

## Mentoring new leaders for surgery

**N**ew nurse leaders not only need managers and coaches—they need mentors. A mentor plays a special role in the development of a new manager. The dictionary defines a mentor as a “trusted counselor or guide.”

Unlike a manager, whose role is to make sure the work gets done, and a coach, who serves as a teacher or instructor, a mentor helps individuals with their personal growth, explains Mary Murphy, RN, BSN, CNOR, who started a formal mentorship program for her organization 2 years ago.

She saw mentoring as the missing piece in building new leaders.

“We were doing a wonderful job of teaching leadership, but you can only learn so much from textbooks and classes. We needed mentors,” says Murphy, who is director of surgical services at Munson Medical Center in Traverse City, Mich.

A key difference is that a mentoring relationship is confidential. “When you mentor someone, it is not just about their professional life, it is also about their personal life and their growth as a human being,” she notes.

Munson’s mentorship program is hospitalwide. All new directors, managers, and coordinators are offered mentors. Murphy presently is mentoring 8 leaders, all from different departments.

### Assigning a mentor

Leaders are assigned a mentor in 1 of 3 ways:

- The human resources department sets up an appointment for a new manager or director to talk with Murphy about the program.
- A manager or director can self-refer to the program.
- A vice president, director, or manager can recommend that a person enter the program.

To become a mentor at Munson, an individual must:

- attend a formal all-day workshop
- have positive employee opinion surveys
- have been recommended by the vice president of human resources or by Murphy.

Mentors do not mentor personnel from their own departments.

“You can’t be a mentor to someone who reports to you,” she says, because the mentor plays a different role than a supervisor.

### Being available

Mentors make a 2-year commitment and agree to be available as mentors weekly or biweekly for the first 90 to 120 days. Murphy recommends that mentors establish at the first meeting that they must meet with the person they are mentoring for at least 1 hour each month. Murphy has lunch with those she mentors at least once a month and more often as needed.

She assigns the mentors and is the only person in the organization who knows who is mentoring whom. She meets with the mentors as a group at least every 3 months. They discuss how the relationships are going and any struggles they are having. No names are divulged.

After the mentoring program was in place for a year, Murphy sent out a survey.

## ***Mentoring, managing, and coaching***

<b>Manager</b>	<b>Coach</b>	<b>Mentor</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified in field</li> <li>• Concerned about results</li> <li>• Authoritative</li> <li>• Evaluative</li> <li>• Directs</li> <li>• Challenging</li> <li>• Critical</li> <li>• Tells what to do</li> <li>• Answers questions</li> <li>• Corrects</li> <li>• Supportive</li> </ul> <p>"Why haven't you done this by now?"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualified in field</li> <li>• Concerned about how the job gets done</li> <li>• Encourages</li> <li>• Evaluative</li> <li>• Instructs</li> <li>• Shows how</li> <li>• Answers questions</li> <li>• Is firm</li> <li>• Challenges</li> <li>• Corrects</li> <li>• Supportive</li> </ul> <p>"Here's how to get this done and do it better in the future."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has experience to share</li> <li>• Medium, long-term goals</li> <li>• Listens</li> <li>• Works with a person</li> <li>• Inspires</li> <li>• Asks questions</li> <li>• Gives confidence</li> <li>• Is confidential</li> <li>• Advises</li> <li>• Nonjudgmental</li> <li>• Nurturing</li> </ul> <p>"What can we learn from this, and how might you respond differently in the future?"</p>

**The role of the manager is to get the job done, often through subordinates.**

**The role of the coach is to help the subordinates do their job better.**

**The role of the mentor is to see to the personal growth of the individual.**

### **Some synonyms**

**Manager:** Boss, director, administrator, supervisor

**Coach:** Trainer, teacher, instructor, tutor

**Mentor:** Advisor, counselor, guide, guru

*Source: Lyn Jenks, Charlevoix (Mich) Area Hospital Foundation. Reprinted with permission.*

She says the results showed all the participants thought the program had been highly effective in helping them develop as leaders.

### **Art of mentoring**

Mentoring is an art that involves nurturing and confidence building, Murphy says. Mentors offer support and don't judge. A mentor's main role is listening and being a sounding board.

"People you are mentoring may be upset with their boss. They know they can come to you, and you will listen and keep the conversation confidential," she notes.

Though a coach or a manager can tell an employee what to do, a mentor doesn't. A mentor asks questions to get a person to expand his or her thinking, such as asking, "Have you thought of another way of doing that?" A mentor doesn't say, "I wouldn't do it that way."

Murphy says she has mentored colleagues who have been through extremely difficult work times. Though she knew they didn't belong in their jobs, as a mentor she did not tell them so directly. Instead, she helped them to realize it themselves.

"I tell people that the only time I will tell them what to do is if they are going to jump off a cliff," she says.

Mentoring takes a certain type of person, she says. In choosing mentors, she looks for individuals who are inspirational, well balanced, and have a passionate interest

in helping others succeed.

She spends a fair amount of time in the beginning with those she mentors to get to know them and form a relationship. Once the relationship forms, the rest evolves. She shares her own life and workplace experiences as a way to get them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences with her.

### **No time limit**

A mentoring relationship has no time limit. Some relationships last for years, and some last months. Murphy advises mentors to evaluate their relationships once a year and decide whether to continue with them. The persons being mentored may feel their needs have been met, and it is time to move on, or they may want to continue. She says there is a time when you both sense it is time to end the relationship. Murphy has been mentoring some people for 7 years and believes they will probably be lifetime relationships.

### **Mentoring for physicians**

Because of the success with the nurses, Murphy met with the medical staff leadership to see if there was an interest in a mentoring program for new physicians entering the organization. The vice president for medical affairs sent letters to the physicians, asking if they wanted to start a mentoring program. Twenty physicians volunteered to be mentors.

But the physicians are having more trouble getting started as mentors, she says. They want a checklist of what they need to do to be a mentor and aren't as comfortable with the concept of forming a relationship and letting it evolve.

The physicians have asked for more education on mentoring, she adds, noting they see value in it and all say they wish they could have had a mentor.

The physicians also have asked her to help them by attending their get-acquainted meetings.

"I am willing to do whatever it takes to help physicians and nurses be mentors," says Murphy. "I think we have the responsibility to help people develop as leaders and to help people develop, period. It is very rewarding work." ♦

—Judith M. Mathias, RN, MA