

# Superintendents' Training - Lesson 1

## Personal Development

To support your personal growth, we recommend that you develop an album of your lessons, responses to the questions, and your selection of reporting activities. Include your personal objectives, prayer requests, and answers to those prayers.

### Lesson 1: Essential Leadership Art—Focus on Empathy, Sympathy, and Mentoring

#### Objectives

As a result of this lesson you will be able to:

- Verbalize the difference in the terms *empathy* and *sympathy*.
- List important elements of a mentoring curriculum.
- Write a profile of a mentor.
- Explain the role of self-esteem in the mentoring process.
- Outline strategies for discussions.

#### Resources

Books may be ordered through your Adventist Book Center.

*The Mentor's Spirit*, by Marcia Sinetar, St. Martin's Press.

*Power Witnessing: How to Witness to Different Personalities*, by David A. Farmer.

*People Styles at Work*, by Robert Bolton and Dorothy Bolton, American Management Association.

*Sabbath School Leadership* teacher-training series articles: "How Temperaments Affect Sabbath School"—August through November 1997 issues; "How People Learn"—December 1997 through May 1998 issues.

#### Working Definitions

- **Empathy:** A woman *empathizes* when she steps into another person's shoes and walks in them, experiencing how the shoes do or don't cushion her feet from the pebbles or icy pavement or hot asphalt and what it does to the rest of her body, her mind, and her spirit.
- **Sympathy:** A woman *sympathizes* when she looks at the shoes in which another person has been walking and possibly takes time to scrutinize the wear areas on the sole, notes the material, researches manufacturing data, sniff's the insoles, does some calculations—and then imagines how that person's feet have fared because of the pebbles or icy pavement or hot asphalt on which that person walks.
- **Self-esteem** comes from knowing myself and the kind of person I am. It is learned and earned. Self-esteem is being proud of myself for my actions and for the person I am.

#### Introduction

Most of us can talk about a skill or connection we have only because someone paid special attention to us, coaching us, pushing us through barriers. That someone was our mentor.

Yet being a mentor is not just warm memories. There are essentials that mentors must include at the onset of developing each mentoring curriculum. My file includes these two important clippings:

***Creative Training: February-March 1988:*** “Adults learn from the instructor’s behavior modeling. Like it or not, as trainers we are under the microscope each time we step into the training environment. And we may be teaching a lot more than the topic at hand as participants watch our questions, our openness to challenge, our willingness to admit when we’re wrong, our patience in helping people grasp concepts.”

***Training and Development: April 2000:*** “When I asked people what made training most effective for them, they answered that it ‘had to be real.’ It had to take into account their perspectives and experiences, and have relevant and direct application to their work. . . . Learning theorists use the word *context* to describe a focus on reality. Context is the physical, emotional, and intellectual environment that surrounds an experience and gives it meaning.” With these two understandings firmly in place, mentors have a good chance of having a productive and enjoyable mentoring experience.

### Exploration

Protégés get under mentors’ skin, so to speak. They read body language, tune in to attitudes, and penetrate the *aura*—the subtle sensory stimulus (as an aroma), the distinctive atmosphere surrounding the teacher.

Mentors will want to get under the protégés skin as well:

What is this woman’s temperament, personality, and character? The answers determine your approach to her.

How does this man best learn—is he visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic? The answers determine your approach to the learning environment and speak to the type of feedback you would give to him.

### Start on the inside

How much your protégés think they are worth determines how much they’re going to think you think they’re worth. I underscore the need to know the level of a protégés self-esteem by listing just six advantages of people with high self-esteem.

They’re more likely to take positive risks.

They’re prone to resist peer pressure (even adults).

They better cope with changes and challenges.

They more easily set goals.

They’re more likely to explore their creativity.

They tend to share what they know—so you’ll end up smarter, too.

Mentoring will sometimes require that you help your protégés build *their* self-esteem. Some protégés will require that you increase your self-esteem. Here are a few areas to keep an eye on as you work with protégés:

Do they ask questions, give opinions, rightfully “beg to differ” opinions with you?

Do they demand your time, constantly apologize for taking up your time, or something in between?

What do they say when they make a mistake? when you make a mistake?

How do they behave when they have achieved something or receive a compliment?

How do they respond to someone who has role power over them, e.g., parent, pastor, head superintendent?

How do they relate to put-downs—overt and covert ones?

Are they assertive or aggressive or passive aggressive?

Do they talk about their accomplishments appropriately, never, or constantly?

## Build Self-esteem (Yours and Theirs)

**Be/find a godly mentor.** Pray as Daniel did, and search the Scriptures as Jesus did.

**Put fun in the curriculum.** Fun reduces anxiety and inhibitions.

**Forgive yourself** for mistakes.

**Get physical.** Jumping rope, riding a bike, walking, skipping—every day—revs up the learning engines.

**Keep a self-esteem inventory**—a notebook in which you journal daily accomplishments and ideas for correcting mistakes.

## Stick to the Knitting

“Stick to the knitting” is a business term that means to stay on the topic, stay on course as you pursue the goal or a particular segment of the learning process.

Adult learners often have preconceived expectations. Get answers to these questions:

- What does this person really want: to learn trivia, facts, skills or/and make fellowship and social connections? The answer determines the breadth and depth of your training and speaks to your teaching approach and resources. If she needs skills, focus on the specific skills she needs. Does she need to improve in Bible research or in the small group process? - Plan accordingly. If she needs supporters for her ministry, focus on introducing her to those people.
- What does she bring to the learning environment: head knowledge, experience, connections? Don't tell her what she already knows or can discover by applying what she knows. Why connect her with people she already knows or with whom she would clash?

## Hands-on Learning

“Experience is the best teacher” is a cliché that still works. While the teaching aspect of mentoring may not take place in a formal classroom, mastering two discussion techniques is important:

(1) questioning and (2) responding.

Closed questions have one right answer. Open-ended questions give the person room to give more information. Sequence questions. One useful sequence has three basic questioning categories:

**Category 1:** Specific questions are asked simply to recall specific pieces of information to which the protégé has been exposed. These are confidence-building questions that help the protégé build a solid understanding of basic information.

**Category 2:** Relationship questions require the protégé to compare, contrast, and analyze material.

**Category 3:** Capstone questions require protégés to make rather sophisticated personal judgments. So build a solid base of lower category questions before asking these “high-risk” questions.

Of course, a productive discussion is more than an array of excellent questions. The mentor must thoughtfully respond to the responses. The response should serve a specific purpose, one that is clearly tied to the answer. So careful listening is required. At least five options are available:

**Refocus** attention on the topic.

**Clarify** if the person's response is unclear or too general.

**Hold the fort**—Certain temperaments are prone to give simple answers to complex problems, and this can end discussion. Steer the conversation toward other possible answers that help reveal problems with the given answer.

**Accept** all answers as worthwhile responses. Correct in a way that permits the person to maintain a sense of personal dignity. For more insights on this, read “How to Handle a Sensitive Issue” on page 7 of this magazine.

**Substantiate.** Help the protégé look more closely at the logic of responses. This often is done by asking additional specific questions.

### **Conclusion**

While this lesson does not attempt to cover all the nuances of empathy, sympathy, and mentoring, it does bring enough to the table to stimulate a desire for second helpings. Continue to dine by using the listed resources. May your ministry be energized.

### **Required Project**

Read one of the three books in the Resources (numbers 1, 2, 3) listed in the beginning of this article.