

5 Mentoring Lessons John C. Maxwell Uses to Build Every Mentor Relationship

by John C. Maxwell September 03, 2021



The most rewarding part of leadership development is mentoring others.

Unfortunately, there is a severe shortage of mentors today. Olivet Nazarene University surveyed 3,000 professionals and found that 76% believed mentorship was important, but only 37% were involved in a mentor-mentee relationship.

John C. Maxwell traces the mentor deficit to a few sources:

- Insecurity
- Ego
- Inability to discern people's "success seeds"
- Wrong concept of success
- Lack of training

Explore our readers' top five favorite mentoring lessons by Maxwell with guidance for leaders who are transitioning to mentors and specific assignments for mentors to work through with their students:

MENTORING LESSON #1: THE TOUGHEST PERSON TO LEAD IS ALWAYS YOURSELF

“If we are honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that the toughest person to lead is ourselves.” ~ John C. Maxwell

According to Maxwell, we are our own worst enemies for two reasons:

1. We don’t see ourselves as we see others
2. We are harder on others than we are on ourselves

As a mentor, you should remind your students to always conduct an assessment on themselves first before making decisions on how to confront others. Also, teach them the keys to leading themselves including learning followership, developing self-discipline, practicing patience, and seeking accountability.

MENTORING LESSON #2: DON’T MANAGE YOUR TIME, MANAGE YOUR LIFE

“People squander their time when they do things that bring them little or no positive return.” ~ John C. Maxwell

Most of us manage ourselves poorly, so this is a vital lesson for both mentor and mentee to learn. You or your mentee might be managing yourselves poorly if you do one or all of the following things:

- Undervalue your uniqueness doing what others want you to do
- Ruin your effectiveness by doing unimportant things

- Reduce your potential by doing things without coaching or training

By understanding where you're currently falling short, you can begin to grow together, especially when using the guidance and time management techniques John shares in *Leadership Gold*.

MENTORING LESSON #3: THE CHOICES YOU MAKE, MAKE YOU

“Successful people make right decisions early and manage those decisions daily.” ~ John C. Maxwell

Leaders have an especially difficult job because they not only make decisions for themselves, but they also make decisions for others. Mentors will enjoy teaching this lesson to mentees because it sheds a light on the very importance of the relationship they are nurturing.

Since the choices we make are so closely tied to the values we hold, spend some time learning about your mentee: what does he/she care about and how will they react when two of their values come in direct competition with each other?

MENTORING LESSON #4: FEW LEADERS ARE SUCCESSFUL UNLESS A LOT OF PEOPLE WANT THEM TO BE

“As a leader, you will never get ahead until your people are behind you.” ~ John C. Maxwell

According to John, there are two categories of people who contribute to any leader: mentors and supporters.

It won't be difficult for your mentee to recognize the mentors in their lives (i.e. you), but it could be harder for them to identify their supporters. John gives a few examples:

- Time relievers
- Gift complementors
- Team players
- Creative thinkers
- Door closers
- People developers
- Servant leaders
- Mind stretchers
- Relational networkers
- Spiritual mentors
- Unconditional lovers

The following “assignment” is more a task for you than it is for your mentee, but don't forget to encourage them to go through the same exercise.

MENTORING LESSON #5: YOU ONLY GET ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS YOU ASK

“Confidence can be defined as that uplifting, energizing, positive feeling that you possess—before you truly understand your situation.”
~ John C. Maxwell

This mentoring lesson is a little bit deceiving. One might think John wants us to ask better questions of our leaders and our followers, and

he does! But another crucial aspect of questioning involves the questions we should ask ourselves including:

- “Am I investing in myself?” - You have to learn more to lead better.
- “Am I genuinely interested in others?” - If yes, your relationships will be strong.
- “Am I doing what I love and loving what I do?” - The answer to this determines if your leadership journey will be long and fruitful.