

WAYS TO MENTOR A BROTHER

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Freemasonry prides itself on being an organization that is focused on building relationships. We keep up with the times and are not shy about utilizing the Internet and social networking tools, but first and foremost, we specialize in face-to-face personal interaction. Thus, we teach the catechism “mouth to ear,” and we work hard to turn the candidate into a Brother and to turn fellowship into friendship.

Each candidate has a coach, who generally tries not only to teach the catechism of the three degrees but also to talk with the candidate about Freemasonry, to answer his questions, to begin to develop his understanding of Masonic history and philosophy, and to inform him about Masonic traditions and protocol.

As we progress in Freemasonry, we may try to learn more of the ritual. Perhaps we want to learn the lectures, or to qualify for a Warden’s certificate. Again, we have a coach who teaches us, but these sessions often go beyond just learning the words, to discussing their meaning and talking more about Freemasonry in general.

The key point is that these Masonic coaches also serve as Mentors.

In Lodge, we also have speakers on various Masonic topics, and we may read books on Freemasonry on our own or as part of a book

discussion group. These learning experiences may stimulate us to learn even more, and we may seek to converse in greater detail with one of these Masonic speakers, with a book discussion group leader, or with another experienced Mason. Again, these Masons also serve as Mentors.

And finally, we may be approached by, or ourselves approach, a Mason, we know and respect, and begin a mentoring relationship with that Brother.

So this talk is more about the process of mentoring than about the substance of mentoring. With respect to the latter, there are many publications that provide us with the material we need to teach a younger Mason. There is information about Masonic symbolism and Masonic behavior and protocol. There is much to be found about teaching the new Mason about the Fraternity and about training the new officer on his responsibilities, but there is much less available on how to be a Mentor.

We already know that a Mentor serves as a teacher, coach, advisor, and faithful friend, but a Mentor does not have to be the catechism coach, the book discussion leader, or a Masonic speaker. Whoever he is, however, he must be able to expand a Brother's knowledge of the ritual, and of the allegorical and symbolic meanings in Freemasonry. He also must be able to teach and explain the history of Masonry.

In addition, an effective Mentor must understand how confusing Freemasonry may be to a new Brother, and be patient. He should guide a Brother in his progress through the degrees, and help insure that the Brother is prepared to receive each degree. He should accompany the

new Brother to any called communications he is eligible to attend and provide answers or explanations to any question the new Brother may have after the degree conferral – this will be of great value to the Brother in his efforts to learn the catechisms. He should instruct the Brother about the role of the Worshipful Master in the functioning of the Lodge, and the role played by the other officers.

In the process, he will get to know the Brother better and be able to guide him to seek additional responsibilities in Lodge. If a new Brother does not find a function within the Lodge within a couple of years, he is likely to drift away. But it is also necessary to find him a job that is within his comfort level, that coincides with his interests and abilities, and that fits within the time he has available after dealing with family and business responsibilities.

However, mentoring a Brother involves even more than this. Indeed, the most important characteristic of a Mentor is to serve as a role model, a living example of what Freemasonry is all about. What really makes us Master Masons is not memorizing ritual or acquiring Masonic book learning. Rather, it is attained by internalizing and adopting a Masonic way of life, so we are faithful to the obligations we have taken on during these degrees.

Thus, the Mentor must always behave in a proper Masonic fashion. This means supporting and encouraging rather than criticizing a Brother Mason. It means showing courtesy and respect for all men. It means dealing fairly and honestly in all transactions. It is by demonstrating that you live by the Masonic obligations you accepted, and that you practice the

Masonic principles we teach, that you will make your greatest impression on those you are mentoring. This is because the best way of teaching is leading by example; our actions really do speak louder than our words.

Ultimately, as a Mentor, you will introduce those you are mentoring to other Masons to whom you feel they will be attracted. As a result, you will not only help your mentee to meet other Masons, but also help him develop additional friends.

Assignment as a Mentor to a new Brother is an honor each of us as Masons should be proud to accept.

If you are able to serve as a Mentor and meet these responsibilities, three things are going to happen. First, by sharing the teachings you have received you will be taking a Rough Ashlar and helping to smooth the edges. Second, by sharing your time, you will greatly increase the chances that the new Mason will become an active Mason and a contributing member of the Lodge, and third, you will have made a lifetime friend. In sum, the effort you will expend in being a Mentor will be well worth the effort to the Fraternity and will pay you substantial Masonic wages.

Note: Those who become a Mentor may wish to consult the booklet "*Mentoring a New Brother*," which is available on the Grand Lodge Virginia website.