

Mentoring A New Brother



The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge

OF ANCIENT, FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF

THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

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Mentoring A New Brother

What do we mean when we say Mentor a New Brother?

The dictionary defines a “mentor” as “a close, trusted, experienced counselor or guide...” a “teacher, tutor, coach...” In part, the “Presentation Volume” defines the term “mentor” as: “Its motive is simply to indoctrinate each new Mason in the ways of Masonry...” “It will be the Mentor's duty to prepare the mind of the candidate for the reception of the great truths of Freemasonry and an appreciation of its tenets and teachings.” More recently, if you ask a Brother “What is a Mentor?,” he would answer a coach, one who teaches a candidate the catechisms of the three degrees in Masonry.

For us, it should be so much more! All of the above should be combined with forming a lifelong bond with a new friend and Brother.

Why are we concerned about mentoring?

Brethren who are not “mentored” tend to be inactive, card carrying members of the Fraternity. Inactive members eventually become those who demit or are suspended for non-payment of dues.

When do a “Mentor’s” duties end?

They do not. If you expect a new Brother to show a lifelong commitment to your Lodge and to Freemasonry, you must show a lifelong commitment to him. How many Past Masters of your Lodge no longer attend? Could it be because the Lodge lost its focus on them? Although a Past Master does not, and should not, run the Lodge, they can be an invaluable source of advice and knowledge.

Why do some Brethren become actively involved in Freemasonry and some never step foot back in the Lodge?

There appears to be three main reasons why a Brother becomes inactive. (This of course, does not include those whose job or family requirements prevent them from being active.)

The reasons are actually quite simple:

First, when a Brother joins the Fraternity, he does so because he is seeking something. Most of the Brethren who do not return to Lodge did not find what they were in search of when they joined Freemasonry. Freemasonry does not have to change to provide a new Brother with opportunities to fulfill the reason he came into the Fraternity.

Secondly, the new Brother did not feel needed, or did not feel like he was a part of the Lodge. During the process of mentoring a new Brother, you should find ways of helping him become involved in the Fraternity. Brethren want to be involved in Lodge activities. Provide them some meaningful opportunity to serve. Assign them to an active committee. Assign them a role in one of the degrees, or anything else, just get them involved as soon as possible.

Finally, meetings are boring. A business meeting alone, without programs, will NOT keep Brethren coming back to Lodge. Brethren must juggle time between many obligations. They will spend their time where they find the most benefit. Never let a Brother leave a Lodge meeting without the feeling that he made good use of his limited time.

Keep the business of a Lodge to a minimum. Hear committee reports instead of holding planning discussions during the meeting. The Secretary should summarize where possible, and not re-read everything that occurred during the meeting when reading the minutes.

Why do men seek admission?

In talking with the Brethren of several successful Lodges, they found that the men seeking admittance to their Lodge(s) did so primarily to serve their communities. Only as a second motive were they there to improve themselves. One simple way to find out what he is seeking is to ask the new Brother why he sought admission. The investigating committee could provide this information. The Lodge should be prepared to provide opportunities for the new Brother that relate to his reasons for joining the Lodge.

How can we keep their interest?

Keep the new Brother involved in Lodge activities. Continue to provide opportunities to serve the community. Continue to fulfill the Brother's reason for joining the Lodge. Make sure you never have boring meetings with no programs. Finally, keep the Brethren informed about everything going on in the Lodge, the district, and Grand Lodge functions. Each Brother should be able to choose where he wants to be active in his limited time. It is not up to the Lodge Secretary to determine what correspondence to read. All members should be informed of all events, charitable opportunities, and service opportunities. All of your members should receive your newsletters and/or Lodge e-mails. Remember, each Brother is a living advertisement for Freemasonry, even if he no longer lives near your Lodge.

Does the Brother still need to be coached?

Yes, most definitely. In taking this a step further, recommendations from some successful Lodges are: send the new Brother through the degrees in Freemasonry using the "Alternative Method for Advancement." The Lodges then strongly encourage the new Brother to learn all three catechisms. This keeps them involved in the Lodge while they continue learning about the Craft. With the "traditional" method of learning the catechisms, you are not allowed to attend or participate in Master Mason's Lodges and schools, etc.

until you are raised a Master Mason, usually taking up to six months. This can cause a new Mason to lose interest if he feels he is not part of the Lodge. Look at your Lodge history and count the number of Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts, who have not proceeded further. The “Alternative Method for Advancement” quickly advances them through the degrees and doesn’t stop working with them as soon as they are raised. With the Alternative Method for Advancement, you do not have to be an experienced Mason to be a person’s coach. This can be accomplished by using the newer members, too. This is one way a new Mason can be involved in the Lodge.

How can we accomplish this?

Your Lodge should have coaches who are familiar with the work of the Alternative Method for Advancement and coaches who are familiar with the catechisms. They do not have to be one and the same person, and usually a person's talents do not include both. Some Lodges have so many candidates that classes are offered for the candidates to participate as a group.

Who can be a Mentor?

Any Master Mason. This is a good way to get new Brethren involved in the Lodge.

How many “Mentors” should a new Brother have?

At least three.

The one assigned by the Worshipful Master, plus both signers of the petition. If a ritual coach is also assigned by the Worshipful Master, the total would be four.

Remember: This is the bare minimum!

Who should be a Mentor?

The first two should be the signers on his petition. The next person should be assigned by the Lodge.

What does a Mentor do?

Basically, it is the person who provides the catalyst to the new Brother, and the new Brother with the desire to become an active Freemason throughout his life.

Among other things, a Mentor can be the one who builds a permanent friendship and brotherly bond with the new Brother.

He provides a platform for the new Brother to form other new friendships.

While a coach teaches the new Mason what Freemasonry is, and what it means. The Mentor is the one who shows the new Brother what it means to live Freemasonry in his daily life.

Please suggest some ways a Mentor can perform his duties.

He is the one who takes the new Brother to visit other Lodges.

A Mentor takes the new Brother to: his first Grand Lodge, his first Division Leadership Conference, his first Reid James Simmons Academy of Masonic Leadership, his first Lodge School, his first District School of Instruction, his first Grand Master’s Official Visit, etc.

He is the one who sits with the new Brother

He is the person who calls the Brother to check on him.

He picks the new Brother up from his home and brings him to Lodge.

He sends the new Brother and his family cards on holidays, his Masonic birthday, etc.

He gets the new Brother involved with Lodge projects.

He introduces the new Brother to the other members of the Lodge and visitors.

He takes time to talk with and LISTEN to the new Brother.

He makes sure that the new Brother is able to meet with his assigned ritual coach or Alternative Method of Advancement coach.

He takes the new Brother to meet the widows, and encourages the new Brother to make an occasional telephone call or send a card to a widow on special occasions.

He takes the new Brother to meet an infirm or shut-in Brother. He encourages the new Brother to make an occasional telephone call or send a card to the infirm Brother on special occasions.

Take the new Brother to visit a member the Lodge has not seen for awhile. Encourage that Brother to come back to Lodge. Again, encourage the new Brother to call on his fellow Brethren from time to time. Show him by example that all of the members of the Fraternity are important to the Lodge.

These are only suggestions, but the more you use “Mentors,” the more active your Lodge will be.

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