

## ‘Ultimate Cycle of Gratitude’ Defines Best Mentee/Mentor Relationships

By Michelle M. Wicmandy

*I'm grateful to my mentors; they helped shape and mold me into the person I am today.*

~Joelle Pfeiffer



Joelle and Dr. John Carter of the Gestalt OSD Center, one of my greatest mentors.

Throughout my life, I credit much of my success to the teachers, college professors, and coaches who recognized my potential and mentored me. They generously provided the structure, guidance and support necessary for me to reach major milestones and achieve success in my personal and professional life.

### **Why Seek a Mentor?**

So, why should you seek a mentor? It's plain and simple: most of us don't see our own weaknesses. The mentor helps illuminate blind spots and provides insight on how your actions are holding you back from advancing or reaching your destination. To overcome these obstacles, you must be willing to listen and accept feedback from your mentor. Furthermore, you must exercise patience while deciphering between productive and stagnant choices. Through this development process, you'll eventually learn which tools to keep, which tools to tweak and which tools to toss. Undergoing this amount of change results in an internal paradigm shift, which is difficult to achieve alone. Mistakes are inevitable and you must be able to forgive yourself in the process. For both parties - the mentor and mentee, compassion is key!

"Seeking mentors significantly influenced my career-path," says Pfeiffer. "Mid-career, I entered graduate school. I was drawn to the Gestalt approach to coaching and Organization Systems Development. I pursued mentoring from two professors whose expertise and skill sets in Gestalt (OSD) intrigued me. My mentor's influence over the 2-year program created pivotal changes in my career which resulted in great leaps in my success."

### **Finding the Mentor & Developing the Relationship**

Know that finding the right mentor and bonding with them can take time. Many mentor-mentee relationships evolve organically while others are sought. In these instances, you may need to scout for and develop close, strategic relationships with key people who are willing to share tips and provide guidance about their development that can significantly impact your career-path.

Once the right mentor(s) are discovered, relationships need to be formed. Developing successful mentor-mentee relationships require three important components: goals should be set, formal and informal sessions should be scheduled and commitments should be made.

### **Why Mentor?**

What's in it for the mentor? A give and take process, mentoring offers the ultimate cycle of gratitude. Mentoring is a personal development relationship that stems from a "pay-it-forward" philosophy. Through sharing experiences, the mentor helps less experienced individuals reach their desired personal and professional goals. "My responsibility as a mentor is to coach, to share my knowledge and experiences, and to support the mentee," explains Pfeiffer. "I have walked beside over 150 professionals and helped each make choices and develop their career. It's intrinsically rewarding to see other people blossom and move ahead." By helping the other person overcome challenges and pursue their passion, you make a difference.



Joelle (L) with one of her mentees (and the mentee's spouse).

### **Should You Mentor?**

Is mentoring for you? If you're considering becoming a mentor, be curious about your protégé. Take a genuine interest in getting to know the individual both personally and professionally. Learn what makes the person tick. Help mentees succeed by raising awareness of areas standing in the way of where the mentee wants to go. However, don't treat your protégé as an incomplete person that needs to be fixed. Focus on providing personal development to meet the needs for that individual. Provide guidance. Offer support. Be compassionate. Most importantly, approach every situation with gratitude.

"Life is short," says Pfeiffer, "Be courageous. Live boldly. Live your dreams....and never give up."

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### **Joelle's recommended books**

Leadership Agility: Five levels of mastery for anticipating and initiating change  
by William B. Joiner and Stephen A. Josephs.

Daring Greatly

by Dr. Brene Brown