

# MENTEE HANDBOOK



Version 1.0

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## Introduction: The Black Future Lawyers Program

Black Future Lawyers Program (BFL) is a collaboration between UofT Law, our Black Law Students Association (BLSA), members of our Black alumni community, and the broader legal profession. Funded by UofT's Provost's office, the University of Toronto Faculty of Law's Black Future Lawyers Program (BFL) offers supports and engagement opportunities to Black undergraduate students who aspire to go to law school and become lawyers. BFL's goal is to increase the number of Black students who apply and gain admission to UT Law and other law schools across Canada and beyond.

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The BFL Mentorship Program fosters supportive connections between Black undergraduate students and Black lawyers. BFL students will benefit by gaining exposure to a lawyer's support and experience, as well as learning about different career paths within the legal profession.

This handbook was created to support you as a mentee and to help you get the most from your participation in the Black Future Lawyers Mentor Program. In this booklet you will find a brief introduction to mentoring, along with a collection of supports and resources.

**See Website:** [bfl.law.utoronto.ca](http://bfl.law.utoronto.ca)

## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship based on encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect, and a willingness to learn and share from each other. Mentoring is a learning relationship; its purpose is to provide an opportunity for the mentee to develop and accomplish their aspirations through the support of their mentor. The relationship requires a genuine and mutual commitment from both the mentee and mentor. (Zachary et al ,2009).

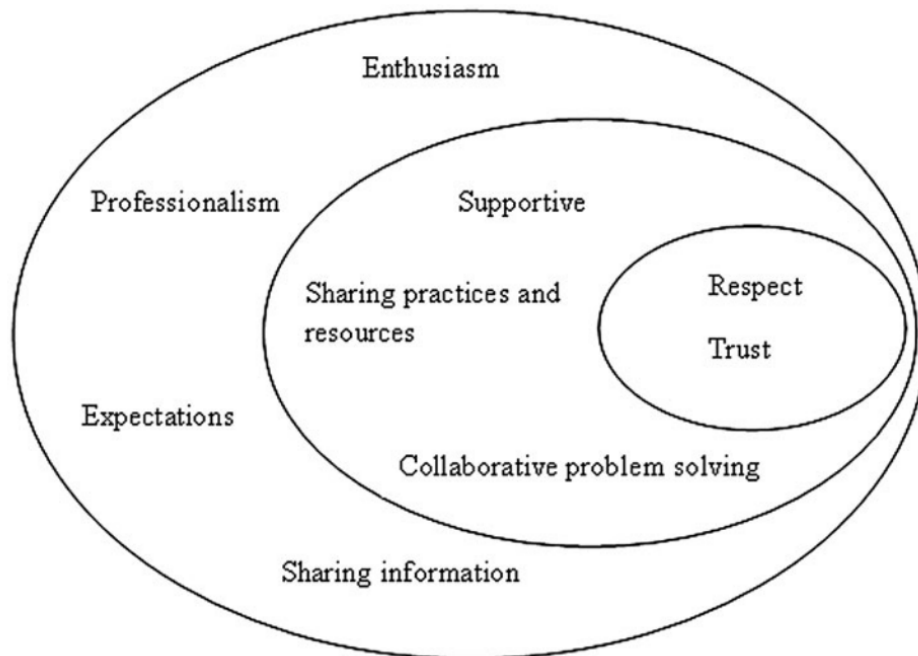


Figure 1. Model for forming the mentor-mentee relationship (Hudson et al, 2015)

## What is a Good Mentor-Mentee Relationship?

A good mentor-mentee relationship has 4 elements: reciprocity, learning, relationship, and mutually defined goals.

### **Reciprocity**

This means you and your mentor have equal engagement. Essentially you both are responsible for nurturing the relationship. You both have much to gain from the relationship as well. You may be wondering what can your mentor gain from you? Research has shown mentors say that they receive a great deal of satisfaction of mentoring and deepen their knowledge and experience (Zachary et al, 2009). They are able to expand on their own perspectives and add to their knowledge. It is important as a mentee to see yourself as a contributor to your mentor/mentee relationship. Your knowledge and experience is also valuable!

### **Learning**

In this relationship the main purpose is to learn. The relationship can be great but without learning there is no mentoring. According to Zachary et al (2009), the mentee should always be learning and gaining new perspectives from their mentor. Mentoring is learner-focused, so it is important to understand yourself as a learner. Therefore, it is critical to establish the ways you learn best with your mentor.

### **Relationship**

In any relationship you have you have likely worked on it for some time. It takes time to develop meaningful relationships. This is also true in mentoring; it is difficult to learn if you don't feel supported and secure in the relationship. Therefore, it is critical that mentoring partners work on maintaining and establishing trust. To have authentic and honest conversations and have commitment there needs to be a solid foundation that underpins the relationship (Zachary et al, 2009).

### **Mutually Defined Goals**

You want to gain the most out of your mentorship relationship— for that to happen you must define goals. Maybe you have an idea of what you want in your mind but unless you actively share with your mentor what those goals are it is hard to achieve. Clarifying and articulating your learning goals can lead

to a satisfactory outcome. Once you outline your goals it is also important to continuously revisit the goals throughout the mentoring relationship to stay on track.

By following and implementing these elements of mentoring in your relationship with your mentor you set yourself up for not only a successful relationship but also a meaningful one. The field of law is not an easy one to navigate by yourself. Use this experience as either a stepping stone or possible way to reaffirm your passion and interest in law. Your mentors are here to guide and support you but that can only be possible if you also are willing to be guided and supported.

*“Mentoring is a vital opportunity to pass a hand back to support upcoming lawyers. I’m only where I am because of the kindness of my mentors- and I am thrilled at the opportunity to pass on their advice and wisdom!”*

- Solomon McKenzie, BFL Mentor 2020

## Mentoring Best Practices

Best practices are a set of guidelines, ethics and ideas that represent the most efficient course of action. The best practices set out below are recommended ways you can gain the most out of your mentorship relationship. By following these guidelines, it ensures that not only are you aware of how you should conduct yourself but what you can expect from our mentor as well!

### **Confidentiality & Professionalism**

- Establishing confidentiality in the mentoring relationship is important to creating successful mentorship experiences. Confidentiality will build trust and promote open communication between mentors and their mentees. Mentors may be told confidential information about their mentee in order to best support them in the program, and Mentees may be told personal/confidential stories by their mentors.
- Mentors and mentees agree to maintain confidentiality in regards to information received in their respective roles within the BFL mentorship relationship. Mentors and mentees agree that all matters discussed in the mentorship relationship will be kept confidential unless otherwise agreed upon by both participants. The exception to this rule is where the mentee discloses information to the mentor that causes the mentor to have serious concerns about the well-being of the mentee. In these cases, the mentor seek assistance from the Black Future Lawyers admin team at UofT Law.

### **Transparency**

- Mentorship is an exchange of ideas, experiences and perspectives. Mentor/mentee relationships are built on trust and professionalism.
- Mentees: your mentor has taken on their role with the interest of giving advice and guidance towards your professional and personal development. Mentorship is most effective when both the mentor and mentee are open and honest with each other about their struggles, successes, expectations and experiences.

## **Meeting Places**

- It is common practice to meet in public spaces, such as cafés (especially and the beginning of your mentor/mentee relationship). This way, mentors and mentees are meeting on common ground and in an approachable, casual manner.
- When it is not possible to meet in person, mentors and mentees should meet via an online platform like Zoom, or by phone.

## **Communication**

- In most successful mentorship programs, mentors and mentees speak at least once a month to maintain ongoing communication and to build a strong relationship.

## **Social Media**

- The mentorship relationships mentors and mentees are building are exciting and you may want to share that on social media-feel free to do so! However, be mindful that the confidentiality mentioned earlier applies to social media as well. Please seek out consent from your partner before posting a photo and/or info about your mentoring experience. Be mindful of what you post and be sure not to include personal details pertaining to your mentor/mentee in your posts.



## Sample Questions for Mentees to ask their Mentors

### Background Questions

- What do you hope that I will get out of this relationship?
- What are your goals for our mentoring relationship?
- Why did you decide to be a mentor?
- Have you been mentored before? How did it benefit you?

### Career and Professional Experiences

- What did you take in undergrad and did it relate to law?
- Why did you decide to become a lawyer?
- Tell me about your experience at law school. What were the highlights and lowlights?
- What educational and/or professional experiences lead you to this (area of law)?
- Can you walk me through a typical day as a lawyer in your field of law?
- What was a key lesson you learned early on as young lawyer?
- Are there certain things I should be doing now to prepare myself for the world of law?

### Personal Feedback

- What are 2-3 things that I do well?
- What are 1-2 things that I could do better or differently?
- What could I have done differently in this particular situation?
- What personal or professional skills do you think I should work on developing? And what experiences might help me do that?
- Any other comments?

## Frequently Asked Questions about the BFL Mentoring Program

### **What should I do if I have emailed my mentor but have not received a reply?**

Lawyers are very busy and you may experience delays in response time to your emails. If you do not receive a response after three business days, email them one more time. If you do not hear back from your contact after another two days, notify the BFL Coordinator at [bfl.law@utoronto.ca](mailto:bfl.law@utoronto.ca)

### **What should I do if I can't attend the meeting with my mentor?**

Please notify your mentor if you need to miss an appointment because of illness or emergency. In such situations, you should give as much notice as possible. As mentioned, lawyers are very busy and will appreciate the opportunity to reschedule the time.

### **What should I do if my Mentor wants me to meet during a week when I have multiple exams and deadlines?**

Your commitment to this mentorship relationship is important. Be sure to communicate early and clearly with your mentor and if you foresee a potential conflict with your scheduled hours, try to re-schedule your meeting for a more convenient time.

### **How do I find out about other opportunities?**

Visit the [Black Future Lawyers website](#) for more information. There, we've compiled a list of helpful links about law school, the LSAT, how to write a great personal statement, and other topics.

## Mentoring Learning Plan Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mentoring Time Period \_\_\_\_\_

<b>PURPOSE</b> <i>What must I acquire/improve?</i>		<b>PROJECTED OUTCOME</b> <i>How will I know I did it?</i>	<b>ACTION STEPS</b> <i>How will I actually gain/build/develop skills?</i>	<b>RESOURCES NEEDED</b> <i>Besides the help of my mentor, I will need what?</i>	<b>PROGRESS NOTES</b> <i>What have I achieved?</i>
<b>FIRST GOAL</b>	<b>Knowledge to Gain</b>				
	<b>Skills to Build</b>				
	<b>Attitudes to Develop</b>				

<b>SECOND GOAL</b>	<b>Knowledge to Gain</b>				
	<b>Skills to Build</b>				
	<b>Attitudes to Develop</b>				
<b>THIRD GOAL</b>	<b>Knowledge to Gain</b>				
	<b>Skills to Build</b>				
	<b>Attitudes to Develop</b>				

## Mentoring Resources

### The Impact of mentoring

- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/maryabbajay/2019/01/20/mentoring-matters-three-essential-element-of-success/#1f5c35a745a9>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/smarter-living/why-mentoring-matters-how-to-get-started.html>
- <https://www.practicepro.ca/wp-content/uploads/2002/04/2002-04-mentorship-lsuc.pdf>
- [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mentoring-desparately-nee\\_b\\_8193238](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/mentoring-desparately-nee_b_8193238)
- <https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/issue/making-it-personal-the-four-pillars-of-high-impact-mentoring/>

### How to be a Great Mentee

- <https://experiencelife.com/article/words-of-advice-for-mentees/>
- <https://casnocha.com/2008/04/six-habits-of-h.html>
- <https://hbr.org/2017/11/what-mentors-wish-their-mentees-knew>
- <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ashiraprossack1/2018/04/27/how-to-be-a-great-mentee/#16e4bdcd512b>

### The importance of Mentoring in the Black Law Community

- <https://www.readersdigest.ca/culture/mentoring-young-black-women/>
- <https://www.bigbrothersvancouver.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mentoring-Relationships-Study-REPORT-June-13-2014.pdf>

## References

Hudson, Peter B. "[PDF] Forming the Mentor-Mentee Relationship.: Semantic Scholar." N.p., 01 Jan. 1970. Web. 05 July 2020.

Zachary, Lois J., and Lory A. Fischer. *The mentee's guide: Making mentoring work for you*. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.