

Selecting a Mentor

Mentors can come from within or outside of the nursing profession. Most often, mentors are experienced nurses with a good network and sound understanding of the healthcare system. They are able to share their knowledge and foster the development of leadership skills in less experienced colleagues. You could approach a person who has taught or supervised you and who you think could help you to achieve your goals. You may choose a mentor who is not a nurse, but it should be someone with whom you can develop a trusting relationship.

Look for someone who is generally well respected and has patience, enthusiasm, and a good sense of humour. Make sure the mentor's leadership style is a good fit with your own and that your potential mentor has the time and is willing to devote time to support you as a mentee. A good mentor should also have the skills to advise, teach and counsel in a way that fits your learning style.

Do not be hesitant! This is an opportunity for you and for your mentor. Over time, the relationship may grow into one that is more collegial. If you find you need someone with other skills or a different learning style, seek out another mentor.

We can have many mentors over the span of a career. If you are having any difficulties finding the right mentor to support your career goals in oncology or hospice palliative care, we can help. Contact us at mentorship@desouzainstitute.com and we will discuss your goals and help you find and connect with the right mentor for you. Preparing for the first meeting with your mentor:

1. It is important to open up your schedule to spend time with that person
2. Make a request of that person: tell them what help you need
3. Be open to them possibly saying no – it might not be a good time in their lives to take on a mentee
4. Be open to the possibility that you might change your mind after you have talked to a potential mentor
5. Prepare some mentoring questions to ask your potential mentor. These questions are designed to open up the possibilities, increase the options, inspire creativity, and enhance reflection challenging, but the answers that can be drawn from them are far more insightful seeking factual and objective information or they can be seeking emotional and spiritual connections

Examples of mentoring questions¹:

1. What do you hope to accomplish through a mentoring relationship?
2. What are your goals for your career?
3. What do you hope to achieve within the next 10 years of your life?