

Mentoring Tales, Woes, and Scenarios

KEY QUESTIONS

- (1) How realistic is this scenario?
- (2) What's wrong with this picture?
- (3) Has this ever happened to you?
- (4) What would you do next?
- (5) What would you do in the long-term to avoid this kind of situation in the future?

Too Close for Comfort

Your mentor of one year is trying to “hook you up” with her daughter—who is not your type, by the way. You’ve told her that you are recently divorced and you’ve mentioned to her on a number of occasions that you “are looking.” She’s invited you on a weekend trip with her family—with the express purpose of introducing you to her “perfect little girl.”

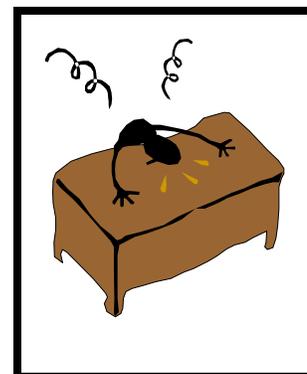


All of this “closeness” comes from your urging that you accompany her at social events, thinking that this may help move your career forward faster. Now you feel that you may have overstepped, and you’re finding yourself in a very awkward position. You think that you really want to “bow out gracefully,” but you’re torn about just how to do it. You don’t want to go down this path, but you also don’t want to jeopardize a good mentor/mentee relationship.

The Apprentice with the “Three Buts”

You’ve had two mentoring sessions with Janine so far, and today she is coming in early for your third meeting. Janine was referred to you by another person that you mentor and you were more than happy to take on one more mentee. You’ve had a number of great mentors yourself and you’re a firm believer in the mentoring process and in giving back.

Janine is having a really bad work experience, and even though she has options to move to another job, she can’t seem to get past this negative situation. Her complaints about this job have dominated your first two sessions. When you make suggestions about how Janine can move forward, her response is always the same...“that sounds like a great idea...BUT...”



Your motto has been that you’ll tolerate three “BUT’s,” but no more. You’re trying to move Janine into the future, but soon your frustrations will be tough to hide.

A Fall From the Top

You are a brand new executive. You're at a holiday office gathering and everyone (except you) has had a little too much to drink. You overhear your mentor George's boss tell a group of executives that George's SES contract is not going to be renewed because of repeated performance problems. No one at the party knows that you are one of George's mentees...or at least you don't think they do.

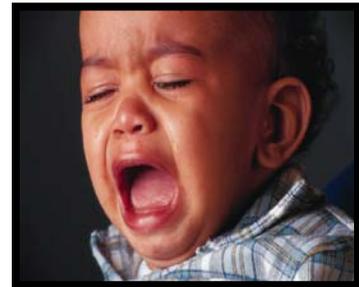


You get to work the next day, and George is standing at your door, looking worried, wringing his hands, and pacing back and forth. As you open your door to invite him in, a meeting breaks up at the far end of the hall, and a number of executives file out. You recognize that many of them were at the party last night and you think you're sure that most of them heard the comments about George.

They gesture to (only) you to come with them to the cafeteria for coffee. You reluctantly tell George that you'll see him a little later and run down the hall to catch up with the group.

Grow...Up!

Tina complains about everything and she is very emotional. In every mentoring session, she cries, and she tells you that people just don't seem to like her. Her workmates treat her poorly...because they don't like her. Her supervisor shuns her, she believes, because he doesn't like her either. Even her supervisor's boss looks at her funny, and she thinks that she doesn't like her either. She has to deliver a special project next week, and she's concerned, because she and her teammates don't get along. She's listed "become more likeable" as one of her desired outcomes from the mentoring relationship.



In the first few sessions, you've listened patiently, provided the Kleenex, and offered what comfort you could. In the last session, however, you decided that you needed to try "tough love" especially since Tina was on the hook for an important deliverable. You say, "Focus on who does like you, Tina. You're here to do a job, not make friends. Concentrate on your performance and doing your work extremely well." You hope that helped.

A week goes by, and Tina is in the waiting area when you get back from a meeting, in tears again. As the mentor, you want to tell Tina that she simply needs to "grow up." You're trying to figure out how to say it so that you get the point across...but you also don't want to crush her ego and what little self esteem she still has left in the process.

The Times, Fred, They Are a-Changing

Fred has been your mentor for years and he's helped you think through a lot of very tough choices and difficult situations. He's given you very sound counsel over the years.



Lately though, Fred has been much more concerned about "how things used to be in the agency," and spends most of your time together reminiscing about the "good old days." He says that he has just seen too much change in his time and in the organization and that some of the old values have just been thrown to the side.

Fred has said to you on more than one occasion (and he has told others as well) that you need to be the person to "carry the torch into the future." He has not elaborated, however, on exactly what that means.

The "Ogler"

You've just been promoted and you absolutely love your new position. You've been working with your mentor for years, and she has been there for you and given you such great advice that you've been able to be a stellar performer and move up in the organization very quickly. You believe that your performance has led to this new post...and you really couldn't be more pleased with yourself and the way things have turned out.

Your supervisor is really a great person to work with. Since you've been there, you've also run into the three other people who served on the promotion board. You've been able to thank everyone.

Ted, the senior manager of the unit, stops by your desk to say hello, and you notice that as he is speaking to you, he's also looking at you in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable. You decide to overlook this and move on. You see him the next day and he does the same thing. On the third day, he shakes your hand and you feel that the handshake lasts a little too long.



You're slated to have dinner with your mentor that evening and you're not sure whether or not you should bring this up—you've heard that Ted and your mentor are good friends. Except for this minor issue...you really love your new job.