

**MENTOR CODE
ORDINARY TO
EXTRAORDINARY**

Sukruti Narayanan



PRIME POINT FOUNDATION



Hindi (भगवद गीता 2.52):

“यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च॥”



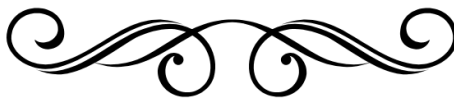
English Translation:

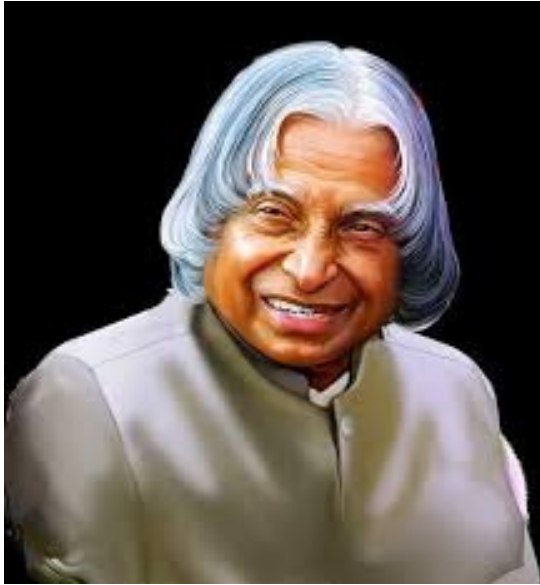
“When your intellect crosses the confusion
of illusion, you shall become indifferent to
what has been heard and what is to be
heard.”



Mentorship Context:

Mentorship leads to mental clarity. It's not
about giving answers, but empowering the
mentee to see through confusion and think
for themselves.





“A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you.”



Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

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Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Introduction

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



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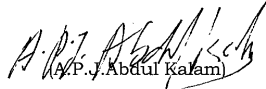
FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th May 2015


A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Dedication



*To **Lord Sri Krishna**, the Almighty, my eternal guide and strength. Like the flute that sings only through His touch, this book flows through His divine will. May it serve as an offering at His feet and illuminate minds with wisdom and purpose.*

🙏 **Jai Shri Krishna!** 🙏

Prime Point Foundation: 25 Years of Empowering India's Youth



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Since 1999, Prime Point Foundation has been helping young Indians become better leaders and communicators. Founded by Shri K Srinivasan, a former banker turned digital journalist, this non-profit organisation has grown into one of India's most respected youth development platforms.

What We Do

The Foundation runs five key programmes that make a real difference:

eMagazine PreSense - Started in 2006 following Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's suggestion, this digital magazine promotes positive journalism. With 220 editions published til June 2025 and recognition from India Book of Records, it includes the popular cartoon character Prince, which Dr Kalam himself launched in 2008.

Sansad Ratna Awards - Since 2010, these prestigious awards honour India's best-performing MPs and Parliamentary Committees. Dr Kalam inaugurated the first ceremony, and over 15 years, 143 Awards have been presented. The India Book of Records acknowledges this as the largest parliamentary award programme run by civil society.

Next Gen Political Leaders - This programme trains young people who want to enter politics, connecting them with experienced Ministers and MPs through workshops and mentoring sessions.

Education Loan Task Force - Helping students and families understand education loans since 2010. The team has answered over 30,000 questions and helped resolve 5,000 serious complaints with banks.

Digital Journalists Association of India - Training journalists to adapt to the digital age, including AI through workshops and seminars with industry experts.

All programmes are run by passionate volunteers and focus entirely on helping young people succeed. Prime Point Foundation proves that dedicated efforts can create lasting change in Indian democracy and society.

About Author



Sukruti Narayanan is a dynamic communication professional with a versatile background spanning education, telecom, technology, media, and entrepreneurship. She is the Founder of RAISE ME, a not-for-profit initiative focused on empowering youth by exposing them to diverse industries early in life. She also leads The Hustler Journalist, a media platform committed to amplifying the voices and efforts of everyday changemakers adapting constructive journalism.

Currently, Sukruti serves as the Global Head of Partnerships for ShakthiSAT, the world's first all-women-led lunar space mission involving 108 countries. She is also an Advisor and contributing journalist for *PreSense*, India's longest-running voluntary eMagazine, and an advisor to DiJAI (Digital Journalists Association of India).

An accomplished leader, Sukruti has successfully organized over 80 national and international events, produced world-record-setting programs, and delivered exceptional media engagement. Her strategic work in building global partnerships and leading impactful marketing campaigns is highly regarded—particularly during her time as Global Manager of the C4F Awards at the World Communication Forum.

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As the Founder of the Global Digital Journalists Forum (GDJF), Sukruti inspires the next generation to embrace ethical, digital-first journalism. Her creative pursuits include a film debut as the second lead in a Telugu feature, underscoring her multifaceted talent and storytelling spirit.

With an MBA in Public Relations, Journalism, and Applied Communication, and ongoing studies in law and digital business, Sukruti's academic foundation enhances her practical expertise. She has been honoured with several accolades, including the "Young Visionary" Award by the Public Relations Council of India (PRCI), and is recognized among India's top women in technology.

Driven by innovation, purpose, and impact, Sukruti continues to lead transformative initiatives that shape narratives, empower youth, and bridge global communities.

Author's Note

In a world that's buzzing with the buzzword “mentorship,” the global professional coaching and mentoring market—covering services provided by active practitioners—with projections reaching around US \$7.3 billion by 2025 — a figure expected to grow steadily in the years ahead. In India alone, the mentorship and ed-tech space has expanded rapidly, especially with the rise of online mentorship platforms catering to millions of youth and professionals alike. While this explosion of programs and platforms may seem promising, mentorship cannot — and should not — be packaged into a one-size-fits-all formula.

True mentorship is not transactional. It is transformational. And more often than not, it unfolds organically.

This book is my heartfelt tribute to such a journey — one that began quietly, without labels, but left an indelible mark on my life. It's dedicated to Prime Point Srinivasan (affectionately known as Prime Pa) — my mentor, guide, and steadfast pillar for over 15 years. When we first met, I didn't consciously seek mentorship, nor did he offer it in a structured form. Yet, through his wisdom, patience, and quiet consistency, he shaped my thinking, strengthened my character, and helped me chisel away my flaws. That, to me, is mentorship in its purest form.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

I recognize how rare it is to walk alongside a mentor for such a long and meaningful stretch of life. Most people, especially in today's hyper-mobile world, don't get that luxury. That's why I feel compelled to share my story — not just to honour Prime Pa, but to show readers what mentorship can look like: subtle, unwavering, deeply personal, and incredibly powerful.

Mentorship doesn't always come from a single person. It can emerge from a constellation of individuals who appear at different moments in your life — like **Dr. Srimathy Kesan**, who entered my journey after the birth of my daughter and has since become a beacon of inspiration in my personal development. For that mentor, I consider **Damien Toohey** as my mentor too for showing me that one can rule two different worlds simultaneously — Both as a successful commercial pilot and a very successful Barrister. Mentors can come from within your family — your parents, grandparents, neighbours — or even from within yourself. On that note, I have to mention my soul sister **Priyadarshini Rahul**, who is an exemplary proof of building things ground up and winning hearts through hardwork.

Through this book, I hope to demystify mentorship — to move beyond the business model and bring the conversation back to *meaning*. Whether you find a lifelong guide, gather wisdom in fragments, or learn to become your own mentor, I believe that mentorship remains one of the

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most underappreciated yet vital forces shaping human potential.

I will be sharing authentic mentorship stories through this book that will:

1. **Clarify** what mentorship truly means—to receive both wisdom and self-belief.
2. **Highlight** why personal fit, not credentials, matters most.
3. **Show** how mentorship can be a mosaic of many voices—or a reflection of your own self.

Because the real magic of mentorship happens not from programs or certifications, but from real, human connections—whether with another person or with your own deeper self.

As Srinivasan sir always says, to be a good mentor, one must be a very good mentee first.

Wishing you a wonderful journey in mentoring and being mentored.

Publisher's Note

Mentorship has always been central to human growth, bridging generations and passing wisdom seamlessly from one era to another. In today's rapidly evolving world, where the proliferation of technology often outpaces the preservation of human values, mentorship is not merely valuable—it is essential. Recognising this significance, Sukruti Narayanan's remarkable book, "Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary," provides an insightful exploration of mentorship's true essence, beyond the transactional exchanges prevalent today.

Through compelling narratives and authentic experiences, Sukruti demystifies mentorship, emphasising that true mentoring is transformational rather than transactional. In highlighting common pitfalls and the nuanced dynamics that can either strengthen or weaken the mentor-mentee relationship, this book becomes a timely and practical guide. In an era dominated by digital interactions, it underscores the irreplaceable impact of genuine human connections and ethical leadership.

We at Prime Point Foundation are honoured to publish this exceptional work. Sukruti's dedicated effort in capturing the subtle art and profound impact of mentorship deserves our sincere appreciation. She not only honours the mentors who have significantly shaped her journey but also

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empowers readers to seek and nurture meaningful mentorship relationships themselves.

"Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary" arrives precisely when the world needs it most, offering clarity amidst confusion and highlighting integrity amidst superficiality. We are confident this book will inspire current and future generations to value and embrace the profound wisdom mentorship offers, ensuring that this timeless practice continues to enrich and guide lives in meaningful ways.

Prime Point Srinivasan
Founder and Chairman
Prime Point Foundation

Dedication & Acknowledgement

This book would not have come to life without my mentor, Shri Prime Point Srinivasan, whom I call fondly **Prime Pa**. His unwavering patience, relentless perseverance, and unshakable belief in me over the past 15 years have been nothing short of extraordinary. This book is my tribute to him — a token of gratitude for the countless moments he stood by me, especially when my resistance was at its peak. If ever there was a time for payback through purpose, it is now.

To **Vivek Hari Narayanan (Viv)** — my partner in life and strength — your love, encouragement, and faith in me have been my anchor. As we celebrate a decade of togetherness this year, I remain in awe of the blessing you are to me and our daughter, **Krishna**. I could not have dreamt of a more perfect companion.

To my **Father-in-law(Shri Seshagopalan), Mom (Anuradha), Geetha Ma, Sharadha Ma, and Seeta Ma** — thank you for your constant support, silent strength, and every small and big gesture that made this journey lighter.

And to my late **Mother-in-law, Smt. Sumathi, and Great Grandmother, Nagammal and grand fathers – KSV Raman and Dr.Isola Rajagopal** — your love, resilience, and sacrifices echo in every step I take. Your memory is a

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guiding light, and I promise to honour your legacy by striving to bring good to the world.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to **Dr. Srimathy Kesan**, who has been an inspiring role model in my journey of motherhood and life. Her grace, strength, and balance have deeply influenced the way I raise my daughter and navigate the many layers of womanhood.

A special thank you to **Shrino Ma** for being my unwavering support throughout my pregnancy and during Krishna's first year. Your presence during that crucial phase laid the foundation for everything I am building today — both as a mother and as an individual.

The list continues to the countless people who have shaped my thoughts and given me the sprint of energy when I needed it the most.

I owe my existence to Lord Krishna!

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Chapter 1: What is mentorship and why is it needed?



Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

In today's world, *mentorship* is often glamorized—commercialized into a billion-dollar coaching industry, packaged with promises of guaranteed success.

Yet, behind the allure of high-profile mentors and paid programs lies a truth we often overlook: no mentor, however popular, can replace daily discipline, ethical action, and unwavering self-belief.

The real question isn't "Do I have a mentor?"—but rather, "What am I truly seeking from one?"

While mentors can open doors, make introductions, and offer guidance, their impact is only as powerful as the actions we take. Without integrity and execution, even the most connected mentor cannot help us sustain momentum. *Effort is non-negotiable.*

I've known this truth intimately. My own search for direction began in my school years. I had aspirations rooted in engineering and robotics, but often felt misunderstood by those around me—until I met Prime Point Srinivasan sir, fondly known as Prime Pa.

From the moment he saw me, he perceived a spark I hadn't yet seen in myself. I was just a robotics enthusiast with an engineering degree, yet he invited me to his event the following week. I went—and met Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's Scientific Advisor. That moment changed everything.

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Soon after, he asked if I could write. I said yes. Then, he asked my Co- Founder of Robotics and Artificial Intelligence Foundation (RAIF), late Mr. Kris Kumar to appoint me as the President of the Foundation I thought he was joking—but he wasn't. He trained me to anchor the Sansad Ratna Awards, honouring India's top-performing MPs. I was hesitant, unsure. But when I questioned, "Why me?"—he simply said, "Follow." That trust became transformational.

He insisted I had a gift for public relations—something I had never considered. Out of curiosity and faith, I enrolled in a postgraduate program in PR, Applied Communication, and Journalism. That decision redirected my life's course. Every step he recommended felt unpredictable—yet it always led to growth I couldn't have imagined.

Today, as I write this book on mentorship, I do so as a tribute to Srinivasan Sir—a man who saw what I could become long before I did. Without him, I wouldn't be here.

But I recognize: not everyone thrives under such instinctive, trust-driven mentorship. I often reflect—had I possessed more clarity and receptivity earlier, I might have absorbed even more.

Which is why, dear reader, I'm sharing a Mentor Fit Matrix in this book—not to prescribe the "right" mentor, but to empower you to identify one who aligns with your values,

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goals, and rhythm of growth. Don't spend fortunes chasing mentorship illusions. Choose wisely. Choose intentionally.

Because sometimes, the greatest mentors don't arrive with fanfare. They arrive as quiet catalysts—changing your life forever.

From a psychological perspective, mentorship activates several dimensions of human cognition and development:

- **Cognitive modeling:** Mentees observe how mentors think and act, shaping their own patterns (Bandura's Social Learning Theory).
- **Scaffolding:** Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" suggests that people grow best when supported by a more capable peer or adult.
- **Attachment Theory:** A mentor often fills a "secure base" role—providing safety for exploration, similar to a caregiver in early life.

Why Does the Mind Need Guidance?

Humans are wired for relational learning. The brain is a social organ that thrives on mirroring, feedback, and affirmation.

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With a mentor, the mind:

- Builds confidence through external validation.
- Enhances resilience by learning how mentors manage failure.
- Gains clarity and strategic foresight by integrating mentor perspectives.
- Forms neural shortcuts by leveraging their lived experiences (pattern recognition).

Without a mentor:

- The brain relies solely on self-regulation, which may be limited by blind spots.
- Individuals may experience decision fatigue or chronic doubt.
- Learning becomes trial-and-error focused, which is slower and often discouraging.
- Emotional regulation in stress may decline, increasing burnout risk.

However, not everyone needs a traditional mentor. This brings us to the next question.

Can One Thrive Without an External Mentor?

Yes—but conditionally. Many people cultivate an *internal mentor* through self-reflection, books, spiritual practices, or therapy.

Examples:

- Steve Jobs referenced intuition and silence as his mentors.
- Marcus Aurelius, in his journal *Meditations*, reflected on people he admired and “mentored” himself through their examples.

Thriving without an external mentor requires:

- High self-awareness.
- Access to quality information and feedback loops.
- A network of peer-based guidance.
- Willingness to embrace failure and iteration.

In short: you can thrive, but it may take longer and come with more emotional and cognitive wear.

We will see about internal mentoring techniques in the coming chapters.

Use this Mentor Fit Matrix to assess whether someone is truly right for you:

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| Criteria | Questions to Ask Yourself | Ideal Response |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Alignment of Values | Do their ethics and life philosophy resonate with mine? | Strong resonance |
| Experience Relevance | Have they walked a similar path or achieved what I aspire to? | Demonstrated success in your field/goal |
| Availability & Intent | Are they willing to invest time genuinely, not superficially? | Offers intentional, consistent guidance |
| Challenge vs. Comfort | Do they push me beyond my comfort zone while still encouraging me? | Constructive feedback with emotional safety |
| Comms Style | Do I feel heard, respected, and | Open, non-hierarchical communication |

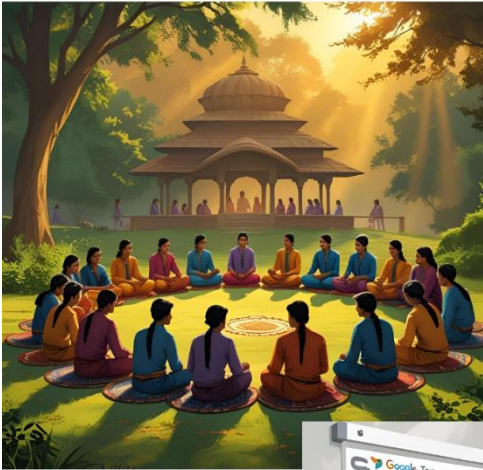
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| | | |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | understood when we speak? | |
| Growth Reflection | Am I evolving mentally/emotionally after interactions with them? | Clear internal shifts after sessions |
| Integrity Check | Do they live what they teach, and act with honesty? | High integrity and authenticity |

Mentorship is not just a career-building tool — it's a neuro-emotional relationship that helps anchor us during storms, clarify our path, and elevate our potential. Whether you find it in a person, a practice, or within yourself, the essence remains: we grow best in trusted company — even if that company is your own higher self.

As Srinivasan sir always says, there is a huge difference between skill transfer session and mentorship. One should experience it to know the difference as mere words cannot explain this. To those who are searching your own best self-
Keep reading!

Chapter 2: From Gurukul to Google — A Brief History of Mentorship



Throughout human history, mentorship has served as the invisible scaffolding behind civilizations, revolutions, inventions, and personal transformations. As a researcher tracing the lineage of mentoring across cultures and centuries, I find no other human relationship as powerful and evolutionarily essential as that between a mentor and their protégé.

The Gurukul System: India's Timeless Model of Mentorship

One of the earliest and most sophisticated models of mentorship emerged from ancient India in the form of the Gurukul system. The word Gurukul comes from “Guru” (teacher or master) and “Kul” (family or home). In this model, the student (shishya) did not just attend classes — they lived with the Guru, imbibing knowledge, values, discipline, and even personal habits through close, lifelong proximity.

This system was not transactional; it was relational and holistic. The Guru was more than a teacher — they were a moral compass, philosopher, and life architect. Learning was immersive: students learned logic, astronomy, statecraft, grammar, archery, music, and meditation — but also chores, simplicity, humility, and endurance. They rose with the Guru, worked beside them, and absorbed through observation and inquiry.

Notable Examples from Indian Epics:

- **Krishna and Arjuna** (Mahabharata): In a moment of complete emotional breakdown on the battlefield, Arjuna finds solace and clarity through Krishna's mentorship. Krishna doesn't just advise; he awakens Arjuna's dormant inner wisdom, laying the foundation for the *Bhagavad Gita*.
- **Chanakya and Chandragupta Maurya**: Chanakya, the master strategist, trained a shepherd boy to become the emperor of India. His mentorship not only forged an empire but also shaped India's earliest treatise on political science — the Arthashastra.
- **Valmiki and Lav-Kush**: The sage Valmiki didn't just write the Ramayana — he raised and mentored Sita's sons, educating them in music, warfare, ethics, and storytelling, ultimately enabling them to carry forward the epic's legacy.

These weren't isolated cases. In traditional Indian society, mentorship was a sacred dharma, not a luxury. It was deeply intergenerational, with wisdom passed through living example, not through institutional programs or performance metrics.

Mentorship in Other Ancient Civilizations

- **Plato and Socrates:** In Greece, Socrates mentored Plato, who later mentored Aristotle — forming a golden chain of intellectual mentorship that influenced politics, ethics, and science for centuries.
- **Confucius and his disciples:** In China, Confucius' teachings on filial piety and social harmony were preserved and disseminated by his students, showing that mentorship could transmit not just skills, but philosophies.

From Guilds to Google: The Industrial Shift

As societies industrialized, mentorship evolved from domestic and spiritual spaces to professional and institutional settings:

- **Medieval Europe:** Apprenticeship became the norm in guilds. A blacksmith, tailor, or baker trained an apprentice over years — skills passed not through manuals but by example.
- **Modern Tech World:** Today, companies like Google, Microsoft, and Meta have formal mentorship programs that pair young talent with senior leaders — a return to the Guru-Shishya spirit, now digitized.

Yet despite technological tools, the essence of mentorship remains unchanged — the transmission of insight, accountability, and belief from one human to another.

Few Examples of Mentorship That Shaped Modern Leaders

1. Steve Jobs and Bill Campbell: The Mentor Behind the Visionary

In the lore of Silicon Valley, Steve Jobs is often portrayed as the solitary genius — brilliant, abrasive, and infallibly visionary. Yet behind these qualities stood a man with deep emotional intelligence and humility, who helped transform Jobs from a volatile product visionary into a refined, emotionally evolved business leader. That man was Bill Campbell, a former college football coach turned executive, whose quiet mentorship helped reshape not only Jobs but the very ethos of Silicon Valley leadership.

Bill Campbell, fondly known as the “Trillion Dollar Coach,” mentored many iconic tech leaders, including Steve Jobs, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, Eric Schmidt, and Sheryl Sandberg. But it was his relationship with Jobs that offered perhaps the clearest example of mentorship as emotional calibration — a transformational process rather than transactional advice.

Steve Jobs and Bill Campbell’s relationship began when Jobs returned to Apple in 1997 after being ousted 12 years

earlier. By then, Apple was on the brink of collapse, and Jobs needed more than technical acumen — he needed leadership maturity.

Campbell, who was then on Apple’s board, had earned a reputation as someone who understood the emotional dimensions of leadership. He offered Jobs the one thing he rarely received: a mirror and a compass, unfiltered and compassionate.

“Bill didn’t just tell Steve what he wanted to hear,” recalled Jonathan Ive. “He told him what he needed to hear.”

Incident #1: Rebuilding Apple’s Team Culture

One of Campbell’s earliest interventions was to rebuild Apple’s leadership dynamics. Jobs had returned with a singular focus — product excellence — but Apple was bleeding from internal politics and fragmented departments.

Campbell helped Jobs understand the need for collaborative leadership. He advised him to surround himself with people who would challenge him, not just follow orders. Jobs began to listen more — to Tim Cook’s operational discipline, to Jony Ive’s design purity, and to Phil Schiller’s marketing instincts. The difference? Campbell’s voice was in his ear reminding him: “It’s not about being right. It’s about getting it right.”

Incident #2: Handling the iPod–iTunes Conflict

In the early 2000s, Apple faced an internal war. The iTunes team, reporting to Eddy Cue, was clashing with the iPod division. Jobs, famously intolerant of mediocrity, was ready to axe people.

Campbell counseled Jobs to address the tension with empathy, not just authority. Rather than punish, he facilitated dialogue — emphasizing cross-functional harmony over top-down mandates. This emotional moderation helped Apple deliver one of its most successful integrations, eventually leading to the iTunes Store — a milestone that revolutionized music consumption.

Incident #3: Jobs' Emotional Maturity During His Illness

Perhaps the most profound impact Campbell had on Jobs came during his illness. Jobs, diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2003, became more introspective. Bill became not just a mentor, but a spiritual coach, urging Jobs to embrace vulnerability, delegate effectively, and prepare Apple for life after him.

Campbell was the one who helped Jobs nurture Tim Cook as his successor. While Jobs initially hesitated — seeing himself as irreplaceable — Campbell reminded him that succession planning was not about replacement, but legacy.

Incident #4: The Pixar Connection

Bill Campbell also helped Jobs during his Pixar years. Jobs often felt isolated in the film industry, where egos clashed as much as in tech. Campbell encouraged Jobs to trust Ed Catmull and John Lasseter, and step back from micro-management.

This trust led to Pixar's golden run — culminating in the Disney acquisition in 2006, where Jobs became Disney's largest shareholder.

What Made Campbell Unique as a Mentor

1. **Radical Candor:** Campbell had the rare ability to be both brutally honest and deeply empathetic. Jobs, who was often shielded by fear or flattery, valued this rare authenticity.
2. **Coach, Not Consultant:** Unlike traditional business advisors, Campbell focused on people and values. He rarely discussed profits; he focused on building teams that trust.
3. **Heart-First Mentoring:** He taught Jobs the importance of love, respect, and service in leadership. Jobs, once labeled as emotionally distant, evolved into someone who, in his final Apple address, spoke about love more than technology.

“Steve was a genius,” Campbell once said. “But even geniuses need someone to remind them of their humanity.”

Legacy of the Relationship

When Jobs passed away in 2011, Bill Campbell was among the few who had access to his inner circle — a testament to the profound trust they shared. Many insiders believed that without Campbell’s mentoring, Jobs might have remained a brilliant technologist but not become the kind of enduring leader who built a resilient Apple.

Their relationship exemplifies the core of real mentorship: it’s not about making someone more like you, but more like their best self.

2. Oprah Winfrey and Maya Angelou: The Wisdom Whispered into a Legacy

In the tapestry of Oprah Winfrey’s remarkable journey — from a troubled childhood in Mississippi to becoming the most influential woman in global media — one thread glows with spiritual and emotional brilliance: her mentorship with Dr. Maya Angelou, the celebrated poet, civil rights activist, and truth-teller of Black womanhood.

While Oprah became a household name as a talk show host and cultural icon, she often said that Maya Angelou gave her the language and emotional literacy to claim her own life and purpose. This wasn’t a mentorship of formal

structure or strategic business planning. It was rooted in lived experience, poetic wisdom, and fierce honesty — the kind of mentorship that reshapes a soul before it reshapes a career.

The Foundation: Finding a Voice through a Literary Guardian

Oprah first encountered Maya Angelou through her book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* — long before they met in person. Having endured sexual abuse as a child and growing up in poverty, Oprah found in Maya’s story a mirror of her own trauma, and more importantly, a roadmap for survival through words.

Their formal meeting came in the early 1980s, and Oprah described it as “meeting the mother of my soul.” From that moment, Maya became her spiritual anchor, not just a literary figure but a guiding presence who helped her grow into the woman the world would come to admire.

“She was there for me always, guiding me through some of the most pivotal moments in my life,” Oprah would later write.

Incident #1: Reclaiming Power from Trauma

When Oprah struggled with feelings of shame over her past — especially her teenage pregnancy and abuse — Maya

Angelou didn't console her with pity. Instead, she reframed Oprah's pain as a source of power and testimony.

She once told Oprah:

"You did what you knew how to do. And when you knew better, you did better."

This single line became one of Oprah's most quoted life mantras. It helped her shed the weight of guilt and instead focus on growth and self-forgiveness, both of which became central themes in her personal healing and public brand.

Incident #2: Teaching Emotional Control and Public Grace

During her early talk show years, Oprah would sometimes become overwhelmed by emotion — reacting strongly to guests, critics, or social backlash. When Oprah confided in Maya about her desire to lash out at critics or fight battles publicly, Maya offered a lesson in restraint:

"You need to know when to stand still. And when to move forward with grace. You are not just your emotions."

This advice echoed deeply. Oprah began practicing spiritual and emotional discipline, a transformation that became evident in how she conducted sensitive interviews — with poise, empathy, and insight.

Incident #3: Handling Betrayal with Wisdom

One of Oprah's most painful public moments was the betrayal by a close friend who sold personal information to the press. Distraught and angry, Oprah turned to Maya, who offered a pointed but freeing insight:

“When people show you who they are, believe them the first time.”

This line would go on to become another hallmark phrase often associated with Oprah's philosophy on relationships. Maya's mentorship here wasn't about sympathy — it was about clarity and boundaries, a masterclass in emotional discernment.

Incident #4: The Legacy Conversation

In the late 1990s, Oprah began to feel the weight of her platform. She feared she wasn't doing enough to make meaningful change. Maya Angelou reminded her that living her truth publicly was a revolutionary act, especially as a Black woman in media.

“You have no idea what your presence does for others,” Maya said. “You don't have to speak for every woman. Just speak your truth. That will be enough.”

This moment crystalized for Oprah that her story was service, and she began to shift her career towards more cause-driven initiatives — including *Oprah's Book Club*, *O*,

The Oprah Magazine, and the OWN Network — all designed to uplift and educate.

What Made Maya Angelou a Transformational Mentor

1. **Wisdom Through Storytelling:** Maya used metaphor, poetry, and personal narrative to guide. Her mentorship wasn't instructive — it was evocative.
2. **Emotional Integrity:** She challenged Oprah to feel deeply but not drown, to speak boldly but not wound — balancing vulnerability with strength.
3. **Spiritual Anchoring:** Maya gave Oprah language for the soul, often reminding her of her lineage, her responsibility, and her sacredness as a woman of color.

Legacy of the Relationship

When Maya Angelou passed away in 2014, Oprah mourned not just a friend or mentor — but what she called her “spiritual queen mother.” The mentorship had transcended the professional; it was a sacred relationship rooted in truth, love, and the power of words.

Their bond stands as a beacon for anyone seeking mentorship — a reminder that the best mentors don't just teach you how to lead; they teach you how to live.

3. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and Prof. Satish Dhawan: A Legacy Built on Trust, Patience, and Purpose

In the arc of Indian scientific history, few relationships have had as profound and far-reaching an impact as that between Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, India's Missile Man and former President, and his mentor Prof. Satish Dhawan, the legendary Chairman of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation).

While the nation saw Kalam as the visionary behind India's missile and satellite programs, it was Satish Dhawan who laid the moral and scientific foundation for Kalam's journey — not just by instruction, but by example. Their relationship stands as a testament to how mentorship in science must transcend mere technical training, embracing humility, ethics, and a sense of national service.

The Foundation: From a Scientist to a Statesman

Dr. Kalam first came under Prof. Dhawan's mentorship in the 1970s when he was appointed Project Director of India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV-3). Dhawan, then Chairman of ISRO, was known not only for his brilliance in aerodynamics and leadership of India's space program but also for his quiet strength, patience, and trust in young talent.

It was under this nurturing yet demanding environment that Kalam's abilities were tested and refined — not just as a technologist, but as a leader.

Incident #1: The Failed Launch – 1979

Perhaps the most quoted and defining moment in their relationship came on August 10, 1979, when the SLV-3 mission failed.

Kalam was devastated. The rocket had veered off course, and the payload never made it to orbit. The media was quick to highlight the failure.

At the press conference that followed, Prof. Dhawan did something extraordinary — he took full responsibility in front of the press, shielding his team.

“We failed,” he said. “Not Dr. Kalam, not his team — but we, as an organisation.”

But what happened next left an even deeper impact. The following year, when the SLV-3 mission succeeded in July 1980, Prof. Dhawan sent Kalam to address the press and claim the victory.

“He gave me the stage when we won, and stood before the fire when we failed,” Kalam later recalled.

“That was the moment I understood what leadership and mentorship truly meant.”

This incident etched humility and integrity into Kalam's leadership DNA.

Incident #2: Empowering Through Trust

While Dhawan was known to be a perfectionist, he never micromanaged. When Kalam was designing the SLV-3, Dhawan allowed him full autonomy, even when others doubted Kalam's relatively young age and managerial inexperience.

"He never once interrupted my decision-making process," Kalam wrote.

"He trusted me, and that trust made me want to become worthy of it."

Through this, Kalam learned that true mentorship isn't about control — it's about enabling responsibility.

Incident #3: Teaching Patience and Scientific Temper

As a passionate and sometimes impulsive engineer, Kalam was often eager to accelerate timelines and push projects aggressively. Dhawan, a seasoned researcher trained under von Kármán, taught him the value of scientific patience.

He would remind Kalam:

"Science is not just about speed. It is about precision, integrity, and long-term value."

This slowed-down rigor became central to how Kalam approached his later missile development programs and even his presidency.

What Made Satish Dhawan a Transformational Mentor

1. **Grace in Crisis:** By owning failure and giving credit, Dhawan taught Kalam that a true leader shields his team — and uplifts them when they succeed.
2. **Empowerment Through Trust:** He entrusted massive national responsibilities to a younger Kalam — cultivating leadership, not just competence.
3. **Ethical Foundation:** Dhawan embedded values of humility, national service, and scientific integrity — pillars that defined Kalam’s later presidency.

Legacy of the Relationship

When Dr. Kalam became the President of India in 2002, he often invoked the name of Prof. Dhawan as the shaper of his conscience and scientific thought. Their mentor-mentee relationship wasn’t about authority and obedience — it was about shared vision, responsibility, and ethics.

Dr. Kalam didn’t just build rockets — he built lives, just as Dhawan had built his. And through his mentorship of others — from young students to ISRO scientists — Kalam passed on the values gifted to him by his Guru.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

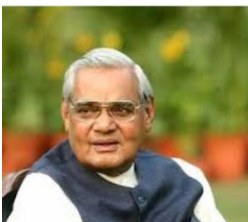
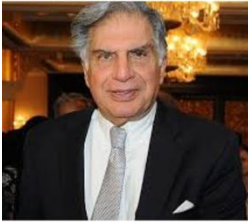
From the forest hermitages of Gurukuls to Silicon Valley boardrooms, mentorship has evolved — but it has not eroded. The format may have changed, but the fundamental need for wisdom-sharing, accountability, and self-discovery persists across eras.

If the Gurukul system was mentorship by immersion, today's world needs mentorship by intention. With distractions rising and attention spans shrinking, finding a true mentor — *or becoming one* — is more valuable than ever.

I would like to share more incredible stories of what real mentorship looks like in the next chapter.

I have chosen stories from various industries and I thoroughly enjoyed narrating it. Hope you get inspired from these stories too.

Chapter 3: The Core of Mentorship- Not Just Skills, But Values and Wisdom



Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Stories of Incredible mentors who have shaped India through their relentless contribution in mentoring the youth of the Nation.

In the evolving landscape of leadership, where artificial intelligence and rapid digital transformations dominate discourse, the quiet power of mentorship remains irreplaceable. At its heart, mentorship is not a transaction of knowledge, but a transmission of wisdom — a deep human connection that nurtures potential, builds character, and anchors purpose.

Psychologists like Albert Bandura and Lev Vygotsky have long emphasized the importance of social learning, where human behaviour and skill development are shaped by observing, modelling, and interacting with more experienced individuals. Modern neuroscience backs this too — showing how mentorship not only sharpens cognitive pathways but also boosts emotional resilience and long-term goal orientation.

The Indian Ethos of Mentorship: Passing the Flame

India's cultural landscape has always revered the Guru-Shishya parampara. Mentorship in India was never simply about passing on information. The guru imparted dharma (ethics), sadhana (discipline), and viveka (discernment) — the true cornerstones of leadership.

Let me walk you through a few real-life moments and what they taught me — because mentorship is best understood through experience, not just definition.

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam: The People’s Mentor: Science, Civic Leadership & Character



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, renowned as the “Missile Man of India” and the 11th President of the nation, was more than a scientist and statesman; he was a mentor who ignited minds across disciplines. His mentorship transcended conventional boundaries, nurturing individuals in science, governance, and journalism, instilling in them a sense of purpose, integrity, and service to the nation.

Mentorship in Science: Dr. N. Valarmathi – Pioneering Space Scientist

Dr. N. Valarmathi, an accomplished scientist at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), led the project for RISAT-1, India’s first indigenously developed radar imaging satellite. Her journey from a small town in Tamil Nadu to the forefront of India’s space endeavors was profoundly influenced by Dr. Kalam’s vision and encouragement.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

In recognition of her contributions, Dr. Valarmathi became the inaugural recipient of the Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Award in 2015, instituted by the Government of Tamil Nadu to honor individuals who promote scientific growth, humanities, and students' welfare.

Dr. Kalam's belief in empowering women in science and his emphasis on indigenous technological development were instrumental in shaping Dr. Valarmathi's career. His mentorship fostered a generation of scientists who continue to propel India's advancements in space technology.

Mentorship in Civic Engagement: Prime Point Srinivasan – Championing Parliamentary Excellence

Prime Point Srinivasan, a communication strategist and former banker, found a mentor in Dr. Kalam who inspired him to channel his expertise towards nation-building initiatives. Under Dr. Kalam's guidance, Srinivasan launched PreSense, India's first digital magazine focusing on communication, governance, and ethics, aimed at nurturing informed and responsible citizens which is still continuing since 2006.

Furthering this vision, Dr. Kalam suggested the establishment of the Sansad Ratna Awards in 2010 to recognize outstanding Members of Parliament based on their performance. He inaugurated the first award

ceremony, setting a precedent for transparency and accountability in legislative processes which still continues.

Through these platforms, Srinivasan has mentored numerous young writers, analysts, and civic enthusiasts, perpetuating Dr. Kalam's legacy of ethical leadership and public service.

Legacy: Mentorship as Nation-Building

Dr. Kalam's mentorship was characterized by humility, accessibility, and an unwavering commitment to nurturing potential. He believed in the transformative power of education and the importance of guiding individuals to realize their capabilities.

His influence is evident in the achievements of his mentees, who continue to contribute significantly to India's scientific progress and democratic integrity. Dr. Kalam's approach serves as a model for mentorship that prioritizes character, competence, and a dedication to the greater good.

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's life exemplifies how mentorship, rooted in vision and compassion, can inspire individuals to achieve excellence and contribute meaningfully to society.

Dr. Kalam's legacy lives in every village where PURA took root, in every parliamentary intern who saw ethics in action, and in every student who still carries his autograph, his vision, or his dream. His legacy endures through the

accomplishments of those he mentored and the values he imparted.

Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Rani Mukerji: Crafting Depth Beyond Stardom



In the glittering world of Indian cinema, where fame often overshadows finesse, filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali has stood apart — not just for his visual grandeur, but for his ability to transform actors into artists. Among the many stars who've flourished under his guidance, Rani Mukerji remains a shining example of what true mentorship can sculpt. Rani has spoken about how Bhansali taught her patience, dedication to craft, and the power of silence — qualities that transformed her from a newcomer into one of India's most respected actors.

The Mentor Who Taught Stillness in a Noisy Industry

When Rani Mukerji entered Bollywood, she was instantly recognized for her expressive eyes and unmistakable voice. But it was under Bhansali's mentorship that she evolved from a performer to a powerhouse. Though they have collaborated selectively, Rani has frequently credited

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

Bhansali as one of the few directors who demanded more than screen presence — he demanded truth.

During their collaboration on *Black* (2005), Bhansali pushed her into uncharted territory — portraying a deaf and blind woman, inspired by the life of Helen Keller. The role required a complete unlearning of traditional acting. It wasn't about beauty or dialogue delivery — it was about emotion, restraint, and surrender. Rani had to rewire her instincts. And it was Bhansali who guided her through this deep artistic immersion.

“He taught me the power of silence,” Rani once said in an interview.

“In his world, even a pause has meaning. I learnt to listen, not just act.”

The Mentorship Model: Obsession, Discipline, Vulnerability

Bhansali's mentorship isn't tender — it's tough love with artistic obsession. But for those willing to be shaped, the results are profound:

Obsession for Detail: Bhansali is known to rehearse scenes dozens of times, sometimes only to capture a single emotion. Rani recalled how even the tilt of her head or the weight of a sigh was discussed in *Black*. He taught her that

excellence comes not from perfection, but from emotional precision.

Discipline of the Craft: Unlike directors who wrap up early, Bhansali's sets are temples of discipline. Under him, Rani learned how actors must respect the space, the story, and the silence between lines.

Vulnerability as Strength: Bhansali stripped away vanity. Rani wasn't the glamorous heroine in *Black*. She was broken, raw, and human. That trust — to be seen as vulnerable on screen — became the turning point of her career.

Notable Incidents

On the sets of *Black*, Rani was reportedly struggling with a key emotional scene. Bhansali didn't explain the scene logically. Instead, he played a piece of piano music and simply said, "*Feel her silence.*" That moment unlocked the scene — not because of technique, but because Bhansali had taught her to channel empathy, not just skill.

The performance later won her every major acting award in India that year, and *Black* remains one of Indian cinema's most emotionally resonant films.

Mentorship That Redefines Legacy

While many directors direct actors, Sanjay Leela Bhansali mentors them. His approach isn't about churning stars — it's about creating timeless characters and grounded human beings. Rani Mukerji, post-*Black*, took on roles with greater depth and conviction — in *Mardaani*, *Hichki*, and *Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway* — each a testament to the emotional rigour she internalised from Bhansali's school of thought. In her own words:

“He didn't just direct me. He dismantled the idea of who I thought I was — and helped me become who I could be.”

That is mentorship in cinema — not noise, but nuance.

Conclusion: Mentorship in Cinema – Beyond the Frame

In the world of cinema, where lights, scripts, and fame often take center stage, true mentorship is the quiet force behind the curtain — shaping not just performers, but people. Mentors like Sanjay Leela Bhansali don't merely teach camera angles or line delivery; they instill discipline, emotional courage, and a deep reverence for storytelling.

In a fiercely competitive and commercialised industry, mentorship offers something rare — a safe space to fail, to feel, and to flourish. Just as Bhansali guided Rani Mukerji to discover strength in silence and truth in vulnerability, great cinematic mentors awaken authenticity in an actor's

craft. They teach that great cinema is not made in front of the camera — but in the conviction, character, and inner journey of the artist.

True mentorship in cinema, then, is not about launching stars — it's about nurturing storytellers who carry humanity in every role they play.

Pullela Gopichand and the Hidden Gems of Indian Badminton



In the echoing silence of pre-dawn Hyderabad mornings, the hum of shuttlecocks and whispered footsteps marks the start of something extraordinary — not a match, but a mission. At the heart of this mission is Pullela Gopichand, a former All England Champion turned architect of India's badminton renaissance. But Gopichand's real victory isn't just in titles or medals — it lies in the lives he's transformed through mentorship that is equal parts discipline, devotion, and emotional resilience.

P.V. Sindhu: Discipline Before Spotlight

When P.V. Sindhu first walked into the Gopichand Badminton Academy at age 8, she was not just enrolling in a training program — she was being shaped by a philosophy. Her daily routine started at 3:30 AM, with her

parents driving over 56 km each way from their home. Gopichand laid down the rules early: no mobile phones, no late nights, no excuses.

He believed discipline was not a restriction, but a liberation — freeing athletes from distraction to immerse fully in craft. During the 2016 Rio Olympics, he didn't just coach Sindhu — he became her shield. He carried her kitbag, enforced her routine, and made sure no media glare disturbed her mental zone. Behind her silver medal was a coach who mastered invisibility — stepping back so his mentee could step forward.

In interviews, Sindhu has often credited him with creating “an unshakeable belief system” within her. And it was this internal strength, not just technique, that made her the youngest Indian woman to win an Olympic medal.

Saina Nehwal: Turning Rebellion Into Resolve

Saina Nehwal, fiery and focused, often challenged Gopichand in her teenage years. Where another coach might have scolded or sidelined her, Gopichand absorbed her rebellion and channelled it into performance. He didn't just train her to win — he taught her how to lose with grace and how to lead with grit.

At the 2008 Beijing Olympics, a barely-18 Saina became a national sensation by reaching the quarterfinals. But what the world didn't see was how Gopichand had mentally

prepared her to carry the emotional weight of the nation's hopes. He taught her that pressure is a privilege — and that character reveals itself not when you win, but when the world is watching you fail.

By 2015, Saina became World No. 1, the first Indian woman to do so. She has since spoken about how Gopichand's belief in her was often more solid than her own. That kind of mentorship doesn't just improve rankings — it reconfigures identity.

Kidambi Srikanth: From Background to Brilliance

Kidambi Srikanth, once a quiet doubles player unsure of his place in elite sport, was redirected by Gopichand into singles — a move that changed the trajectory of his life. But it wasn't just a strategic shift. It was a shift in self-image. Gopichand worked tirelessly on Srikanth's confidence, analyzing matches into the night and offering personalized guidance at dawn.

In 2017, Srikanth won four Superseries titles in a single calendar year — a feat unmatched by any Indian before him. But behind the titles lay a quiet storm of belief — a mentor who saw what Srikanth could become before he did.

Srikanth once said, “Gopi sir never let me hide behind excuses. He listened more than he spoke, but when he spoke, you acted.”

Coaching as Character-Building: The Real Grit

Unlike many celebrity coaches, Gopichand doesn't wear mentorship as a brand. In fact, his most powerful act of mentorship came off the court — when he mortgaged his family home to build the academy. He was not chasing fame. He was betting on future generations of champions.

His belief: “If you build good humans, great athletes will follow.”

Every rule in his academy — from rising before dawn to cleaning your own plate — is rooted in this belief. Humility is not optional. Integrity is not negotiable. Excellence is not a fluke — it's a ritual.

Legacy: A Mentor Who Chooses the Long Road

Gopichand's story proves a powerful truth: a mentor's job is not to produce stars — it's to build souls. He doesn't promise shortcuts. He promises structure. He doesn't promise fame. He promises focus. And for those who trust him, the reward isn't just medals — it's mastery over mind and self.

In an era where many chase viral validation, Gopichand trains for values. His mentees go on to inspire not just through their wins, but through the way they carry their defeats, fame, and expectations — with grace.

As Sindhu once said:

“He taught me how to believe. Not in results — but in myself.”

That is the invisible power of mentorship — the kind that never trends, but always transforms.

Dr. Kiran Bedi and the Quiet Revolution of Reform-Based Mentorship

In a country as vast and complex as India, the word



“discipline” often conjures images of rigidity or control. But in the hands of Dr. Kiran Bedi — India’s first woman IPS officer — discipline became a bridge to dignity, empowerment, and civic

rebirth. Her brand of mentorship has always walked the tightrope between firmness and faith — believing that even in the darkest corners of society, there are sparks worth kindling.

Over four decades, Dr. Bedi has nurtured not just law enforcement reforms, but human potential — whether among jail inmates, rural girls, college students, or children of incarcerated parents. Her core message is simple but radical: education is not just about grades, it’s about becoming a responsible citizen.

Tihar Jail Reforms: Mentoring Where Hope Was Absent

When Dr. Bedi took charge as Inspector General of Tihar Jail in 1993, it was infamous as a hellhole of violence, corruption, and hopelessness. But Bedi saw opportunity where others saw ruin. She transformed the prison into a rehabilitation campus — introducing spiritual practices like vipassana meditation, along with literacy drives, vocational training, and university education through Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

One powerful story is that of Mahender (name changed), a young undertrial imprisoned for violent crime. Under Bedi's initiatives, Mahender not only completed his high school diploma and a tailoring course but went on to earn a Bachelor's degree in Social Work while still incarcerated. Upon release, he joined an NGO focused on prison reform and eventually became a prison welfare officer himself — turning a life once dismissed by society into a beacon of transformation. Mahender often shares, "Ma'am didn't just give us books — she gave us back our self-worth."

India Vision Foundation: Scaling Mentorship with Impact

Founded in 1994, using her Ramon Magsaysay Award prize money, Dr. Bedi launched the India Vision Foundation (IVF) to institutionalize her philosophy of education-driven social reform. Her foundation works with children of

prisoners, rural communities, and underprivileged youth — especially girls — using a combination of education, civic learning, digital literacy, and leadership training.

One standout example is Meenakshi Sharma, a teenager from a marginalized village in Haryana. Meenakshi was enrolled in IVF’s SmartGram initiative, which integrated classroom learning with life-skills coaching. Through the program, Meenakshi learned not only computers and English, but how to speak assertively in public, understand her civic rights, and take pride in her identity.

By age 19, Meenakshi had become a state-level youth advocate for girls’ education and menstrual hygiene, invited to speak at local panchayat forums and education policy workshops. “Dr. Bedi taught me that discipline doesn’t kill dreams — it shapes them,” she says. “She never coddled us, but she never gave up on us either.”

Assertiveness Without Aggression: A Unique Leadership Code

From her famous towing of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s car in 1982 — for parking violations — to her tenure as Puducherry’s Lt. Governor, Bedi has practiced what she preaches: hold power accountable, including your own.

Her talks at universities, books like “I Dare!”, and her public addresses emphasize “assertiveness without aggression”

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— a principle she urges all mentees to adopt. It's not about loudness; it's about clarity, courage, and civility.

Students mentored by her often describe her as “tough love with a spine of steel and a heart of purpose.” She calls regularly, remembers birthdays, demands updates — but never does the work for them. “I won't push you uphill,” she once told a group of rural girls. “But if you start climbing, I'll make sure you never fall.”

Conclusion: Mentorship as Civic Awakening

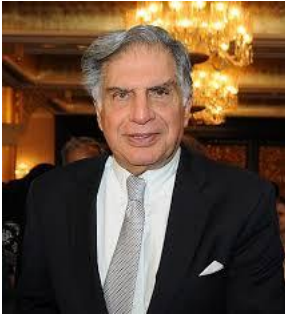
What sets Dr. Kiran Bedi apart is that she doesn't just mentor individuals — she mentors systems. She doesn't just advise youth — she activates them. Her vision of education is not just to produce employable graduates, but conscious citizens who are aware of their rights, roles, and responsibilities in a democracy.

In every mentee — whether a reformed prisoner, a grassroots youth leader, or a civil service aspirant — there's a common thread: self-respect born of discipline, and purpose born of service.

As one mentee put it: “She didn't teach me how to follow the path. She taught me how to make one.”

Ratan Tata and Entrepreneurial Values

Industrialist Ratan Tata, revered as the conscience-keeper of Indian industry, has not only shaped the Tata Group into a global powerhouse but has also mentored a new wave of purpose-driven Indian entrepreneurs. Inspired by his mentor J.R.D. Tata, Ratan Tata has carried forward the philosophy of leading with empathy, courage, and ethical clarity. Over the last decade, he has personally invested in and mentored several young startups — often offering something more powerful than money: trust, time, and values-based guidance.



1. Lenskart – Peyush Bansal’s Leap of Faith

When Peyush Bansal, the founder of Lenskart, pitched his vision of affordable eyewear to Ratan Tata, he wasn’t just seeking capital. According to Bansal, “Tata sir asked a few very sharp questions, then smiled and said: ‘This has potential. You’re trying to solve a real problem.’”

Ratan Tata’s decision to invest personally in Lenskart sent a strong message to the ecosystem. More than the funding, his presence opened doors to credibility, strategic partnerships, and the confidence to scale with integrity. Bansal often shares that Tata’s calm mentorship helped

him stay grounded, especially when Lenskart expanded globally.

2. Bombay Shaving Company – A Masterclass in Purpose

Shantanu Deshpande, CEO of Bombay Shaving Company, calls his interaction with Ratan Tata *“life-altering.”* In a conversation with Tata during a strategic review, Deshpande spoke about marketing tactics and future goals. Tata responded, *“Shantanu, never forget why you started. Don’t chase valuations. Focus on building value.”*

This advice prompted the company to refocus on customer-first thinking and long-term trust over short-term growth hacks. Deshpande said, *“It wasn’t mentoring in the classic sense — he didn’t interfere. But every time he spoke, it reoriented our moral compass.”*

3. Paytm – Backing Innovation Boldly

Vijay Shekhar Sharma, founder of Paytm, often credits Ratan Tata’s early support as a major validation. When Tata personally invested in Paytm in 2015, it was seen as a stamp of trust in Indian fintech.

Sharma shared, *“Ratan Tata believed in our vision when many others doubted. His investment was small, but his name was massive. That one endorsement changed how investors, partners, and customers saw us.”* Tata’s

mentorship, Sharma says, was subtle and rooted in belief, never micromanaging but always watching.

4. Zivame – Empowering Women-Led Enterprises

Richa Kar, the founder of Zivame, built one of India’s first online lingerie platforms in a space riddled with taboos. Tata’s silent encouragement and early backing gave her the strength to tackle stigma and build a category from scratch.

According to Kar, *“He didn’t speak much in meetings, but he’d always ask: ‘Are you proud of the experience you’re creating for women?’ That question defined our journey.”*

5. MURgency – Mentorship for Social Impact

Shaffi Mather, founder of MURgency, an emergency response startup, credits Tata not only for investment but deep personal involvement in scaling the venture with integrity. Mather noted that Tata was especially focused on ensuring accessibility for rural and underprivileged populations, showing his commitment to inclusive innovation.

Conclusion: A Mentor Who Shapes from the Shadows

Ratan Tata’s mentorship style is quiet, principled, and deeply impactful. He doesn’t chase unicorns — he cultivates *values-led leaders*. His guidance has helped founders remain humble while scaling fast, ethical while

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

innovating boldly, and people-centric in the age of profit obsession.

In an ecosystem obsessed with hyper-growth, As one mentee put it: “She didn’t teach me how to follow the path. She taught me how to make one.”

And in doing so, he has become not just a mentor — but a moral compass for India’s startup revolution.

Vajpayee & Advani: The Twin Pillars of Political Mentorship in India



In the landscape of Indian politics, few relationships have stood the test of time like that of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani. Together, they weren’t just architects of the modern Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — they were the twin guiding lights for an entire generation of political leaders.

Where Vajpayee brought poetic vision, statesmanship, and inclusivity, Advani added organizational discipline, ideological clarity, and political endurance. Their mentorship was not instructional — it was experiential. They led not from pedestals, but by walking alongside those they nurtured, offering both wings and roots.

Together, they mentored many prominent leaders in India which transcended beyond party politics. The 3 of India's most prominent leaders that I will be quoting are: Narendra Modi, Sushma Swaraj, and M. Venkaiah Naidu — each of whom inherited a blend of Vajpayee's warmth and Advani's resilience.

Narendra Modi — From Karyakarta to Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's evolution from a humble party worker (karyakarta) in Gujarat to the highest constitutional post in India was shaped deeply by the mentorship of both Vajpayee and Advani.

- **Advani**, who first spotted Modi's potential, trusted him with key organizational responsibilities early on. It was Advani who pushed for Modi's appointment as Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2001, following the state's political turbulence.
- **Vajpayee**, while often offering fatherly restraint, delivered one of the most symbolic moments of mentorship during the 2002 Gujarat riots, when he

urged Modi to follow “*raj dharma*” — the duty of just governance. Though controversial, it reflected Vajpayee’s attempt to balance tough love with trust.

Modi has often acknowledged their influence, calling Vajpayee his “political guru” and Advani his “nurturer in the ideological cradle of the party.”

Sushma Swaraj — The Orator Vajpayee Believed In

The late Sushma Swaraj, known for her eloquence and integrity, often spoke of how Vajpayee and Advani gave her opportunities far beyond her years.

- Vajpayee mentored Sushma not just in oratory but in the subtleties of parliamentary decorum, often encouraging her to take center stage in fiery Lok Sabha debates. He once reportedly told her, “You speak like fire, but carry the calm of a river — use both.”
- Advani saw her as one of the party’s future faces and backed her appointment as the **youngest cabinet minister at age 25**. He believed in giving women leaders space to rise — not as tokens, but as trailblazers.

Their mentorship transformed her into one of India’s most admired external affairs ministers, known for diplomacy with a human touch.

M. Venkaiah Naidu — The Loyal Foot Soldier Refined by Giants

Venkaiah Naidu, India's former Vice President, often credits both Vajpayee and Advani for shaping his ideological foundation and communication style.

- Advani mentored Naidu in the party's grassroots organization — training him to connect with rural India, build booths, and stay rooted in ideology.
- Vajpayee refined his public presence, often encouraging him to rise above rhetoric and represent inclusive nationalism. He famously quipped to Naidu, "More than slogans, what this country needs is statesmen."

Naidu's political journey — from party president to Vice President — reflects a fusion of hard work, humility, and mentorship steeped in values.

Their Mentorship Blueprint: Balance, Boundaries, Belief

Vajpayee and Advani complemented each other perfectly — one offered empathy, the other, structure. Together, they modeled how mentorship in politics is not about cloning oneself, but empowering successors with independence, purpose, and inner compass.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

- **Inclusivity over dominance:** They mentored across genders, geographies, and generations.
- **Democratic ethics over opportunism:** Vajpayee's refusal to form a government in 1996 without a majority and Advani's resistance to personal ambition showed that power could be principled.
- **Guidance without interference:** Even as protégés became giants, both leaders knew when to step back and let them lead.

Relevance in Today's Hyper-Fragmented Political Climate

In an era of polarisation and short-term gratification, the Vajpayee–Advani model reminds us that mentorship in politics is a quiet, moral force. It doesn't always shout. It guides, absorbs, and persists.

Their style wasn't transactional. It was transformational.

As one senior BJP leader once said: "They didn't just train us to win elections. They taught us how not to lose our soul while doing it."

Dr. V. Shanta and the Quiet Empire of Healing – Adyar Cancer Institute



In an age where medicine often becomes synonymous with machinery, margins, and market share, Dr. V. Shanta stood as an unwavering symbol of medicine as service, mentorship as soulwork, and science as a sacred calling. Over six decades at Adyar Cancer Institute, Chennai, Dr. Shanta did more than treat patients — she nurtured an army of healers.

Her legacy isn't built on wealth or fame. It's written in the invisible ink of integrity, emotional grit, and relentless service, passed from mentor to mentee in hospital corridors, 3 a.m. emergency rounds, and whispered prayers beside dying patients.

The Institution as a Mentorship Ecosystem

Dr. Shanta joined the Cancer Institute in 1955 as a young medical graduate — but it wasn't just a workplace. It was, in her words, “a spiritual journey of care.” Under her stewardship, the Adyar Cancer Institute became not just a treatment centre, but a mentorship crucible where young doctors, nurses, researchers, and technicians were shaped not only in skill, but in soul.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

- She introduced a patient-first doctrine, training junior doctors to see patients not as cases, but as individuals with dignity and despair. Many remember her gently rebuking them with: “You can’t talk cancer and ignore the human.”
- Her zero-compromise stand on ethics made her one of the fiercest protectors of affordable care in India — and she demanded the same from her protégés. Doctors trained under her were known for turning down high-paying offers from private hospitals, choosing instead to serve the underserved.

The Mentee Stories: Building Leaders, Not Followers

Dr. Shanta’s mentorship created a ripple effect in Indian healthcare. She personally groomed dozens of senior oncologists, palliative care nurses, and medical researchers — many of whom lead public health missions today.

1. Dr. T.G. Sagar — Now a Senior Oncologist

He often recalls how Dr. Shanta taught him to treat “beyond the tumour.” In his first month, he had suggested an expensive test. She walked him back to the ward and said: “Look into the patient’s eyes first. If they can’t afford their next meal, your test is irrelevant.”

That moment, he says, taught him the ethical core of medicine more than any textbook ever could.

2. Dr. Mallika, former student nurse

Dr. Mallika, now a leader in palliative care, recalls her as the first person to teach “listening as treatment.” Shanta would spend hours holding the hands of terminal patients — and trained her team to do the same.

“She taught us that in the last days, hope changes form. Our job is not to promise life, but to preserve peace,” said Mallika.

Her Mentorship Code:

Discipline with Compassion: She was known to be extremely strict, yet deeply protective. Nurses and doctors alike say that her sharp gaze in the operating theatre taught more than any instruction ever could.

Service over Status: She refused to move into private practice, despite global recognition and the prestigious Padma Vibhushan. Her lesson: “Let the institution outshine the individual.”

Vision with Grit: She fought tirelessly with the government to expand cancer awareness in rural India, often mentoring teams of young public health officers to carry forward prevention campaigns with empathy and urgency.

Legacy: Healing as Mentorship

Dr. Shanta’s mentorship was not defined by courses, programs, or titles — it was transmitted in silence, sacrifice, and moral clarity. Her disciples may not wear her name, but they carry her spirit — in every free screening camp, every hand held in a cancer ward, every rural health worker trained to look beyond statistics.

As one of her long-time assistants wrote in a tribute:

“She never asked us to follow her. She just walked ahead — and we couldn’t help but follow.”

Relevance Today

In a world where AI diagnoses faster than doctors and healthcare becomes increasingly transactional, Dr. Shanta's mentorship reminds us: medicine is not a business; it's a bond.

She built an empire — not of buildings, but of belief.

Her mentorship teaches us that curing disease is only half the battle. Healing the person — that's where the real work begins.

Rukmini Devi Arundale and the Revival of Bharatanatyam Through Mentorship



At a time when Bharatanatyam was pushed to the margins of society — misunderstood, dismissed, and nearly lost — Rukmini Devi Arundale dared to dream of a renaissance. But more than reviving a dying art form, she mentored generations to see dance not just as performance, but as a path to spiritual discipline, national identity, and personal transformation.

Through Kalakshetra, the institution she founded in 1936, Rukmini Devi sculpted dancers not just with technique, but

with vision, purpose, and reverence. She didn't merely train performers — she mentored guardians of Indian heritage.

The Kalakshetra Philosophy: Art as Sadhana, Mentorship as Transmission

Rukmini Devi was not just a choreographer — she was a guru in the truest sense, redefining mentorship in the world of Indian performing arts. Kalakshetra was never meant to be a school alone; it was a sacred space of artistic evolution where living by values was as important as executing an adavu.

Her Mentorship Principles:

- **Discipline through Devotion:** Students at Kalakshetra weren't allowed shortcuts. Rehearsals began at sunrise. Perfection wasn't an option — it was an offering.
- **Art Beyond Ego:** Rukmini Devi refused to let her name overshadow the institution. She taught her students: "You are not the dance. You are its vessel."
- **Tradition with Innovation:** While rooted in the Natya Shastra, she pushed the boundaries of stagecraft — incorporating set design, lighting, and music direction — giving her students a complete understanding of performance as a collaborative art.

Stories of Mentorship: From Mentees to Masters

C.V. Chandrasekhar – From Dancer to Cultural Beacon

One of Kalakshetra's finest products, C.V. Chandrasekhar, often recalled that Rukmini Devi's mentorship was "less about steps and more about stature."

She once stopped him mid-performance rehearsal and said: "Don't show me the lines. Show me the poetry behind them."

That one sentence changed how he approached the stage forever. Today, as a leading figure in Bharatanatyam, he continues to carry that standard of spiritual integrity in dance.

Leela Samson – Voice of a New Generation

Leela Samson, who would later head Kalakshetra and the Sangeet Natak Akademi, credits Rukmini Devi with shaping her into a thinker as much as a dancer.

She once shared: "She taught me that tradition is not imitation — it's internalization. Rukmini Amma let me question, but insisted I earn the right to."

Samson's leadership in contemporary classical dance still bears the uncompromising polish of Rukmini Devi's mentorship.

Legacy: Mentorship Through Aesthetic Consciousness

Rukmini Devi's style was not loud or performative. Her corrections were minimal but piercing. Her praise, rare — but when given, unforgettable.

Her mentorship was anchored in aesthetic consciousness — a deep inner alignment between one's values, emotions, and expressions. Students were not just taught mudras — they were taught how to live artfully.

Mentorship as Cultural Reclamation

In an India rediscovering itself post-independence, Rukmini Devi gave cultural confidence to a new generation. Through Kalakshetra, she reclaimed Bharatanatyam from stigma and returned it to sanctity — and she passed on this mission through meticulous, generational mentorship.

She also integrated Gandhian values, vegetarianism, and Theosophical ideals into daily life at Kalakshetra — reinforcing that art and life were not separate pursuits.

As One Mentee Wrote: “She taught us how to stand, how to speak, how to sit with dignity. Long before we danced, she made us walk like artists.”

Conclusion : Why Her Mentorship Still Matters

In today’s world of instant fame and fleeting trends, Rukmini Devi’s mentorship reminds us that art, like character, must be forged — not fabricated. That mentoring isn’t about producing stars — it’s about cultivating guardians of legacy.

Her vision lives on — not in glittering spotlights, but in the grounded elegance of every Kalakshetra alum who bows before performing, not to impress, but to serve.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa & Sarada Devi: Sculptors of the Eternal Seeker



In the lineage of world-changing mentorships, few are as soul-stirring as the story of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sarada Devi shaping the fiery intellect and restless spirit of Narendranath Datta, the world would later revere as Swami Vivekananda. This wasn’t a mentorship of sermons, but of silence; not instruction, but inner ignition. It was a spiritual alchemy rooted in love, surrender, and profound trust.

The Skeptic Meets the Sage: Breaking Intellectual Pride

As a young man, Narendranath was a rationalist, a brilliant student, and a fierce questioner. He sought proof of God, not poetic metaphors. When he first asked Sri Ramakrishna, “Have you seen God?” the master didn’t respond with philosophy. He said, “Yes. I see Him more clearly than I see you.”

That moment shattered something within Narendranath — not his mind, but his ego. Over time, Ramakrishna dismantled his intellectual pride with tenderness, never humiliation. He did not offer dogma. He offered experience.

Whenever Vivekananda expressed doubts or restlessness, Ramakrishna never forced belief. Instead, he patiently led him through practices of meditation, silence, and bhakti. Slowly, Narendranath transformed from a seeker of truth to a carrier of truth.

Sarada Devi: The Silent Mother Who Watched Him Burn Bright

While Ramakrishna lit the fire, it was Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, who tended it gently. After Ramakrishna’s passing, it was she who held the fragmented group of disciples together. She offered Vivekananda both motherly affection and stern spiritual grounding.

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

When he was consumed by guilt for leaving India during his wanderings abroad, it was Sarada Devi who said:

“No one is more dear to me than Naren. He is doing Thakur’s work. Let him go fearlessly.”

Her words were not mere comfort — they were permission to rise. This reassurance renewed his spirit before his iconic 1893 speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Sarada Devi’s mentorship didn’t involve elaborate teaching. She simply lived what she believed — a life of selfless service, detachment, and unconditional compassion. Her silent strength became the invisible scaffolding on which Swami Vivekananda stood.

Lessons from the Divine Mentors

Together, Sri Ramakrishna and Sarada Devi embodied the yin and yang of mentorship:

- Ramakrishna: the awakened mystic, breaking illusions and planting divine ambition.
- Sarada Devi: the eternal nurturer, who taught him balance, detachment, and inner steadiness.

Vivekananda once said:

“If there is any saint who truly lived Vedanta, it was my master. And if there is any goddess who showed the power of silence, it is Sarada Devi.”

Their mentorship was not transactional. It was transformational.

Legacy: Mentorship as Awakening the Inner Flame

Swami Vivekananda's entire mission — founding the Ramakrishna Mission, reawakening Indian youth, and promoting Vedanta across the globe — was rooted in the lessons of faith, humility, and spiritual service he learned from his mentors.

Their mentorship is proof that sometimes, one enlightened soul and one nurturing presence can awaken the sleeping potential of a nation.

As Vivekananda once confessed,

“I am what I am, not because I studied books, but because I sat at the feet of Ramakrishna.”

Prime Point Srinivasan and the Quiet Revolution of Youth Media Mentorship: Journalism & Public Relations



In a world of clickbait headlines and fleeting trends, where the velocity of information often eclipses its veracity, one man chose a slower, nobler path — that of shaping voices before shaping content. Prime Point Srinivasan — or “Prime Pa,” as he is affectionately known by his mentees — is not merely a name in the Indian media ecosystem.

He is a movement.

A former banker turned visionary mentor, Prime Pa didn't just write stories — he authored destinies. His contributions to journalism, public relations, and civic awareness go far beyond columns and campaigns. His true legacy lies in the lives he has chiselled — young minds he sculpted into responsible communicators, civic leaders, and ethical torchbearers of democracy.

The Mentor Behind PreSense and the Sansad Ratna Awards

It began with PreSense, India's first free digital magazine, launched in 2006. At a time when digital publishing was in its infancy, Prime pa used this platform not just to discuss

communication, governance, and ethics — but to create a live laboratory of mentorship. Young writers, some barely out of school, were trained to edit real columns, conduct interviews with public figures, fact-check, and produce complete issues under his guidance.

Yet the crown jewel of his vision remains the Sansad Ratna Awards — a data-driven, citizen-led initiative founded in 2010 under the blessings of Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Unlike other awards, this platform did not reward popularity — it honoured Parliamentarians based on their legislative performance and public accountability. Through this initiative, Prime Pa wove mentorship into nation-building — exposing mentees to policy, governance, public speaking, journalism, and integrity.

His Model: Exposure. Ethics. Empowerment.

What distinguished Prime Pa was not just the content he taught, but how he taught it. His model wasn't theoretical — it was human, grounded, and deeply relational.

- **Exposure:** Mentees were never spectators. They were placed at press briefings inside the Parliament complex, behind podiums at national events, beside judges and ministers. It wasn't mentoring by lecture — it was mentoring by immersion.
- **Ethics:** "Journalism is not what you publish — it's what you refuse to publish." That was Prime Pa's enduring

lesson. Even when a story was sensational, he would ask: “Is it responsible?” In an age of viral content, he taught value.

- **Empowerment:** Youngsters were trusted with drafting questions for MPs and anchoring national award shows. There were no “small” mentees. Everyone sincere student had a place at Prime Pa’s office.

A Moment That Defined Many

One such incident, etched into the memories of many, involved a young mentee — a girl who had never held a mic professionally — being asked to anchor the prestigious Sansad Ratna Awards in front of top judges, ministers, and media. When she nervously questioned her readiness, Prime Pa simply said:

“You don’t prepare to be confident. You step up — and confidence will meet you there.”

That moment became a turning point in her life — not because she spoke flawlessly, but because someone believed in her before she believed in herself and she was trained meticulously to face the media and the Senior Ministers in Indian Parliament.

I am very proud to say that I was that girl, and I am forever indebted to Prime pa for all the opportunities he has given me.

Legacy Beyond Titles

Unlike many mentors who transfer skills, Prime Pa transmits identity. He doesn't simply teach you how to write or speak — he teaches you why it matters. Through initiatives like PreSense, Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL), and the Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI), he has fostered thousands of minds to think critically, communicate responsibly, and act courageously — all without once demanding the spotlight.

Conclusion: Mentorship as Silent Nation-Building

In an era obsessed with visibility, Srinivasan's style is refreshingly invisible. He doesn't trend. He transforms. His mentorship is slow, steady, sincere — and life-altering. He has cultivated a generation that values truth over traffic, substance over sound bites, and service over stardom.

Today, I poignantly reflect the first time when I walked into Srinivasan sir's office:

“I thought I was helping him with his work. Only later did I realise — he was helping me find my life's purpose”. That, in its purest form, is the essence of mentorship. Not flashy. Not transactional. But sacred. And unforgettable.

A Quiet Revolution in Progress

Mentorship doesn't trend on social media. It doesn't go viral. But it shapes destinies behind the scenes. Whether

it's Kalam guiding India's youth, Oprah being mentored by Maya Angelou, or your grandmother instilling values of resilience, mentorship is legacy-making in motion.

The above-quoted examples have inspired me, and I hope you find the true meaning of mentorship upon reading the real-life incidents quoted above.

In the upcoming chapter, we journey into the evolving landscape of modern mentorship — uncovering how to recognize genuine mentors amidst a world flooded with paid coaching, curated personas, and the constant hum of social media noise.”

Illuminating Conversation with Former Chief Election Commissioner of India – T S Krishnamurthy.



I would like to share an illuminating conversation I had with T S Krishnamurthy sir, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, renowned for his unwavering integrity and commitment to public service. Conducted over Zoom, the interview delves into Mr Krishnamurthy's personal journey as both mentee and mentor, his philosophy of humanising administration, and the nuanced challenges of nurturing talent within the Indian bureaucracy. His reflections, drawn from decades across private, public, and

government sectors, offer invaluable lessons on the transformative power of mentorship, the importance of empathy and efficiency, and the enduring value of integrity in public life.

Suk : As a mentee, please share your personal journey and the impact mentorship has had on your growth.

T S Krishnamurthy: I have worked in the private sector, public sector, and government, gaining exposure to different environments and people. Mentorship is a vital ingredient of good management in any organisation. I was fortunate to have excellent mentors throughout my career—whether in private companies or government. When I joined the bank in 1961 as a probationer, there were no formal training programmes, but many senior officers were willing to guide and advise me. Similarly, in the government, my training at Mussoorie and Nagpur exposed me to instructors and officers who played a significant role in shaping my career.

I experienced both strict, formal mentorship and informal, magnanimous, friendly mentorship. The latter, I found, had a particularly profound effect, especially on young officers. Three individuals in the tax department—Mr CC Gannapati, Mr VV Bagami, and Mr Surinder Narayan—were instrumental in influencing my approach. They taught me sensitivity to issues, punctuality, and the importance of quick decision-making. Most importantly, they instilled in

me the value of humanising administration, reminding me that files represent human interests and grievances. Their guidance made my journey smoother and inspired me to later impart these values to my own mentees.

Suk : As a mentor, we would love to hear about two individuals you've guided who have gone on to hold significant positions in the bureaucracy.

T S Krishnamurthy: Over the years, I have mentored more than 100 individuals, both in theory and practice. I believe every person who approaches you with an issue—whether an official or a member of the public—can be mentored. Among those I have guided, there were IAS officers who later told me that even their own seniors had not treated them as well as I did. This feedback reaffirmed my belief in avoiding rigid hierarchies in mentoring. While I do not single out specific names, I have seen many of my mentees rise to significant positions, their success rooted in the values of integrity and efficiency I sought to instil.

Suk : Challenges in mentorship within bureaucracy – What obstacles have you encountered while nurturing mentees in bureaucratic roles, and how have you addressed them?

T S Krishnamurthy: Officers come from diverse social, economic, and educational backgrounds, so a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. Some respond well to direct instruction, while others benefit more from practical

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

demonstration. Sometimes, the challenge lies with intermediary supervisory officers who may not mentor juniors effectively, requiring senior officers to step in and mentor both levels. There are instances where officers face allegations or grievances—here, it is crucial to guide them towards transparent, evidence-based decision-making.

Another challenge is the tendency within government to focus on rules over people, leading to delays and insensitivity. I have always emphasised the importance of listening, understanding problems, and finding pragmatic solutions, even if it means going beyond the letter of the law. I encourage officers to take decisions promptly, manage time effectively, and remember that authority exists to serve the public, not oneself. In difficult situations, such as when a junior is at risk of being victimised for acting correctly, it is essential for mentors to stand by their mentees and defend their actions if they align with integrity and efficiency.

Suk : What is your core philosophy of mentorship in public service?

T S Krishnamurthy: Mentorship is a fundamental tool of management and should be practised by every senior officer. Young officers, having cleared competitive exams, are brilliant but may need guidance to refine their approach. I liken the mentor's role to that of a sculptor, removing unnecessary parts to reveal the statue within. Officers must

be told they are capable and competent, but must also shed mental and ethical cobwebs.

Integrity and efficiency are the cardinal principles I have always emphasised. These values must be inculcated and practised consistently, as they are ultimately rewarded—even if not immediately. I advise young officers never to ask for specific postings or positions, but to excel wherever they are placed, as recognition will follow good work. Ultimately, the lasting impression one leaves is determined not by designation, but by the impact on people and the trust one inspires.

Suk : Can you share an example where your approach to mentorship made a tangible difference?

T S Krishnamurthy: I recall an incident in Hindustan Shipyard, Visakhapatnam, where a worker, after being promoted, found his income reduced. He was distraught, and I assured him that I would change the rule so that no one would lose pay upon promotion. While I offered to resolve the problem, I patted his back. This small act earned me the goodwill of the workers and the union, despite being an outsider unfamiliar with the local language. Such experiences reinforced my belief that accessibility, empathy, and prompt action are key to effective mentorship and leadership.

Suk : What advice would you give to current and future mentors in bureaucracy?

T S Krishnamurthy: Mentors should make every effort to make new officers and members of the public feel comfortable and welcomed. A smile can be more mentoring than words. It is vital to spend time with new recruits, guide them patiently, and ensure they understand that rules are meant to serve people, not the other way round. Selecting the right people at the entry level and shaping them with care is crucial. Above all, integrity and efficiency must be both taught and demonstrated, so that public trust in governance is continually reinforced

His quote will always remain close to my heart : “It is Nice to be important but it is important to be nice”!

I feel it to be such a privilege to know someone like TSK Sir for more than 10 years. I have been very fortunate to have interactions with such a leader who inspires you inside out.

While I’ve truly enjoyed chronicling the journeys of extraordinary mentors who have unlocked the potential of their mentees, I feel it’s equally important to shed light on the top 10 reasons why mentor–mentee relationships can break down.

Speaking from personal experience, I can say with conviction that I’ve been incredibly fortunate to have Srinivasan sir as my mentor. Despite the immense

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resistance I displayed over the past 15 years, his unwavering patience and belief in me made this mentorship journey deeply meaningful.

Today, as I reflect, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude — and a growing desire to give back. The more I understand the magnitude of his persistence through my own resistance, the more my respect for him multiplies.

Chapter 4 : The Mentor-Mentee common mistakes



In today's era where "mentorship" is a buzzword, it's easy to romanticize the concept and overlook its deeper emotional and ethical terrain. When mentors and mentees get it wrong, the fallout can leave deep scars — broken trust, unmet expectations, or even personal stagnation.

The modern rush to formalize mentorship programs often overlooks this psychological nuance. We celebrate the success stories but fail to prepare people for the emotional labour and ethical responsibility embedded in these relationships.

Below are 10 common mistakes both mentors and mentees — not to criticise, but to humanise the mentoring journey. By understanding these blind spots and their emotional impact, we can begin to reframe mentorship not as a transaction of wisdom, but as a conscious, evolving partnership rooted in empathy, boundaries, and mutual respect.

Mistake #1 : Mistaking Fame to Fitness

Mistake: Choosing a mentor because they are popular or influential, not because they align with your values or growth stage.

Emotional Impact: The mentee feels ignored, used, or insignificant — leading to disillusionment.

Solution: *Choose alignment over achievement.* Do a values check: “Does this person see me or simply want to replicate themselves?” Select mentors who care about your context, not just their clout.

Real-Life Scenario: The Burnout of Kavya

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Kavya, a 28-year-old marketing professional from Delhi, invested ₹5 lakhs in a premium mentorship program led by a globally celebrated influencer with 1.2 million Instagram followers and a TEDx speaker badge.

Initially dazzled by the mentor's persona, Kavya expected personalised feedback and breakthrough strategies. Instead, she found:

- Pre-recorded modules
- Group Zoom calls with 200+ attendees
- Automated “affirmation” emails

Her questions went unanswered. Her career plateaued. Worse, her self-worth took a hit: “If a famous mentor didn't find value in me, maybe I'm not good enough.”

Eventually, Kavya realised she had mistaken celebrity for connection. What she needed was a mentor who could see her, not just someone the world could see.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Backing: The Halo Effect

According to Nobel Laureate psychologist Daniel Kahneman, humans fall prey to the halo effect — a cognitive bias that leads us to believe that someone who excels in one area (e.g., public speaking or social media

clout) must also be competent in other areas (e.g., mentorship, leadership guidance).

“We confuse visibility with value. And in mentorship, that confusion leads to misplaced trust.” – Dr. Carol Dweck, Author of Mindset

Insights from World Mentors

- **Bill Campbell**, known as the Trillion Dollar Coach (mentor to Steve Jobs and Google founders), never had a flashy online presence. His power came from deep, human relationships built in boardrooms, not on broadcasts.
- **Maya Angelou**, Oprah’s mentor, impacted lives not through personal branding but through lived wisdom, listening, and nurturing self-belief.
- **Sheryl Sandberg** (Facebook/Meta) advises, “Don’t ask someone to be your mentor because they’re successful. Ask them because they understand you.”

Action Activities: How to Avoid This Trap

| Activity | Purpose | How to Do It |
|--|--|--|
| Mentor Mapping Grid | Clarify what you need vs. what dazzles you | List top 5 mentorship needs (e.g., emotional resilience, career pathing, decision-making). Compare mentors' actual contributions to those needs. |
| Reality Check Interviews | Learn the truth beyond marketing | Reach out to 3 of their past mentees on LinkedIn. Ask: "Did you get individualised guidance?" |
| Shadow Their Work, Not Just Their Words | Watch how they show up in everyday spaces | Do they reply to comments thoughtfully? Are they mentoring beyond |

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| | | |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| | | Instagram reels and YouTube shorts? |
| Reflection Journal: Fame vs. Fit | Catch your bias in action | Write: “What draws me to this person?” and “Is it based on how they make me feel, or what they can actually offer?” |
| Trial Conversation | Gauge the chemistry | Schedule a short consult (many real mentors offer one). Ask questions about your personal context — observe if they listen, not just pitch. |

Final Takeaway

Famous mentors may inspire millions, but the right mentor will transform you.

Choose someone who sees the small version of you and believes in the bigger version of you — not someone who's too busy building their empire to invest in yours.

“Don't follow the loudest voice. Follow the one that listens to yours.” – Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

Chapter 5: Mistake #2 : Lack of Clear Expectations

“Ambiguity kills mentorship faster than apathy.”



Mistake: Jumping into the relationship without defining the purpose — is it career guidance, emotional support, or technical skill-building?

Emotional Impact: Leads to confusion, guilt, and unmet needs on both sides.

Solution: Have “Mentorship Ground Rules.” Define boundaries, goals, and frequency of interaction. It avoids burnout for mentors and dependency for mentees.

Real-Life Scenario: Rohan & Neha – A Mismatched Mentorship

Rohan, a final-year engineering student from Bengaluru, reached out to Neha, a senior executive in a tech firm, for mentorship. She agreed casually, believing it would be an occasional coffee-chat type of arrangement.

But Rohan expected career road mapping, regular resume reviews, mock interviews, and even emotional reassurance before his placements. Neha, overwhelmed by work, felt cornered and withdrawn. Rohan, in turn, felt abandoned, leading to a deep sense of rejection and unworthiness.

Their promising mentor-mentee relationship quietly ended — not from bad intent, but from poor expectation-setting.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Insight: The Expectation Gap

When we don't define:

- What we need

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- What we're offering
- What's off-limits
...we sow seeds of burnout, guilt, and emotional disappointment.

Dr. Jean Rhodes, leading researcher on mentorship and author of *Older and Wiser*, emphasizes that:

“Most mentorship failures stem from mismatched expectations, not mismatched capabilities.”

Inputs from World Mentorship Leaders

- **Eric Schmidt** (former Google CEO) once said: “The best mentors are the ones you ask for specific advice — not vague validation.”
- **Oprah Winfrey**, mentored by Maya Angelou, described their relationship as “anchored in respect and clarity. I always knew when Maya was my teacher and when she was my friend.”
- **Satya Nadella**, CEO of Microsoft, advocates for setting “clear contracts of engagement” — time boundaries, areas of advice, and success criteria — even in informal mentorship.

Action Activities to Avoid This Mistake

| Activity | Purpose | How to Implement It |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Mentorship Contract | Define scope & commitment | Create a 1-page doc that lists goals, topics, preferred meeting style (Zoom/call), frequency, and how long the relationship will last. |
| Expectation Exchange Session | Align early & check for mismatch | First session = both mentor and mentee list what they expect and what they can give. Then cross-check. |
| Clarity Calendar | Structure for accountability | Decide: Weekly check-ins or monthly chats? Set realistic cadence based on mentor's availability |

Mentor Code: Ordinary to Extraordinary

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| | | and mentee's urgency. |
| Midway Feedback Loop | Prevent silent disappointment | At 3-month mark, ask each other: "Is this working for you? Should we adjust the rhythm or focus?" |
| Define 'Success' Early | Avoid vague metrics | Ask: "What would success look like 3 months from now for us both?" This reframes the relationship as goal-based, not just emotional. |

Emotional Payoff:

Clear expectations bring:

- Reduced emotional fatigue for mentors
- Empowerment and trust for mentees
- A healthy sense of progress and closure if needed

Final Takeaway

Treat the mentor-mentee relationship like a mutual agreement, not a vague hope. The more clearly you define the road, the less likely it is to end in emotional collisions.

Chapter 6: Mistake #3 : One-way Street Syndrome

“Mentorship thrives when it’s a dialogue — not a monologue.”



Mistake: Mentees who take without giving back, or mentors who preach without listening.

Emotional Impact: This imbalance creates guilt, resentment, and eventual emotional fatigue.

Solution: Treat it as mutual learning. Mentees can add value by sharing fresh ideas, enthusiasm, or helping their mentor stay grounded. Mentors must be active listeners too.

Real-Life Scenario: Aisha & Professor Rao – When Generosity Turns Draining

Aisha, a bright postgraduate student in media studies, approached Professor Rao, a respected journalist and educator, for mentorship. At first, it was invigorating — she asked deep questions, showed hunger to learn, and Professor Rao happily shared wisdom from decades in the field.

However, over time, Aisha began treating the relationship like a 24/7 helpdesk. She'd call late at night for career advice, expect editing help on her thesis, and never paused to ask, "How are you doing, Sir?"

Professor Rao, while too polite to refuse, grew quietly resentful. He felt emotionally exhausted and underappreciated. Meanwhile, Aisha assumed the bond was strong — until one day, he stopped responding altogether. The trust collapsed silently.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Insight: The Burden of Emotional Imbalance

According to Dr. Adam Grant, organizational psychologist and author of *Give and Take*, high-quality mentorship must evolve into mutuality — otherwise, even the most generous givers burn out.

“Reciprocity isn’t about giving back equally — it’s about giving back meaningfully.”

From the mentor’s side, Dr. Jean Rhodes notes that mentors who only “download” their experiences without listening can stifle growth and autonomy in their mentees.

Both scenarios — a self-centered mentee and a preachy mentor — lead to emotional fatigue, unmet needs, and eventual collapse of the bond.

Insights from Mentorship Giants

- **Indra Nooyi**, former CEO of PepsiCo, once said: “The best mentor-mentee relationships I had were those where I learned from them, and they reminded me of the real world.”
- **Bill Campbell**, the Trillion Dollar Coach, treated his mentees as equals — often asking them for advice on modern business culture. This created psychological safety, a term popularized by Harvard’s Dr. Amy

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Edmondson as essential for honest learning environments.

Action Activities to Avoid the One-Way Street

| Activity | Purpose | How to Implement |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| “What Can I Give?” Journal | Builds gratitude and contribution mindset in mentees | After every mentor interaction, mentees write down one thing they learned AND one thing they can offer — feedback, resource, help. |
| Active Listening Challenge | Encourages mutual respect and empathy | Both parties try “mirror listening” – repeat what the other said in their own words to validate understanding before responding. |
| Monthly Feedback Dialogues | Reduces silent fatigue or resentment | Every 4 weeks, ask: “Is there anything I’m doing that makes this |

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| | | feel too one-sided?” Safe space to reset expectations. |
| Reverse Mentoring Moment | Reminds mentors they can learn too | Mentees bring one trend, idea, or insight the mentor may not know — new tech, social media, Gen-Z perspective, etc. |
| “Boundaries & Breaks” Agreement | Prevents burnout | Agree on: response time windows, when not to call/message, and off-weeks for recharge. |

Emotional Payoff:

- Mentors feel valued, not drained
- Mentees feel seen as equals, not subordinates
- Relationship becomes energizing, not burdensome

Final Takeaway

A meaningful mentorship is like a dance — both must take turns to lead and follow.

Whether you're guiding or learning, don't just "take" insight — give back presence, respect, and effort. That's when mentorship becomes transformation, not transaction.

Chapter 7: Mistake #4 : Projecting and Transference

“Mentorship is not parenting. And mentees aren’t a redo of our own past.”



Mistake: Mentees see mentors as parent figures or saviours; mentors try to recreate a younger version of themselves.

Emotional Impact: When expectations clash with reality, both may feel betrayed or misunderstood.

Solution: Maintain emotional clarity. Mentees: Don't confuse guidance with emotional replacement. Mentors: See the mentee as unique — not an extension of your past.

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In psychological terms, transference refers to when someone unconsciously redirects feelings or expectations from one person (usually a parent or authority figure) onto another — in this case, a mentor.

Projection, on the other hand, is when someone sees what they want to see in another — either idealizing the mentor as a saviour or the mentee as a “second chance” version of oneself.. This blurs emotional boundaries, creating false intimacy, distorted expectations, and eventually, deep hurt when reality doesn’t match the illusion.

Real-Life Scenario:

Rhea, a young mentee, had recently lost her mother and began working under Ms. Iyer, a senior editor known for her empathy. Over time, Rhea started treating her mentor as a maternal figure — calling her late at night, getting hurt if her texts weren’t answered immediately, and expecting validation for personal choices unrelated to work.

Ms. Iyer, having lost a daughter years ago, also began projecting — pouring all her affection and emotional needs into Rhea, even prioritizing her over other mentees.

Things spiraled when Ms. Iyer gave Rhea an editorial opportunity she wasn’t yet ready for, assuming she would rise to it. When Rhea failed to understand the good intention of the mentor took and took it very light and sought comfort rather than accountability, both were devastated. The

professional bond suffered — but more tragically, the emotional rupture was profound.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Insight:

According to Dr. Nancy Schlossberg, a global expert on transitions and relationships, mentorships often echo our earliest attachments. When boundaries aren't clear, "role confusion" sets in — where the relationship shifts from professional to surrogate emotional dependency.

Dr. Carl Jung warned that "until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate." In mentorship, unconscious transference can turn inspiration into fixation.

Insights from Mentorship Giants:

- Maya Angelou told Oprah: "I am not your mother. I am your teacher. If you confuse the two, you will lose both." Oprah later credited this as one of the most painful yet transformational lessons in her life.
- Bill Campbell, while mentoring Silicon Valley giants, maintained emotional professionalism. He was a "confidant," not a father figure — and he set his role into helping mentees solve, not soothe.

Action Activities to Prevent Emotional Transference

| Activity | Purpose | Implementation |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Role Definition Agreement | Set the relationship scope | Mentees and mentors define: “What are we here for — career advice, emotional support, or both? Where is the boundary?” |
| Reflective Journal | Make unconscious patterns conscious | Mentees: “Why am I emotionally attached to my mentor’s approval?” Mentors: “Am I trying to recreate myself in them?” |
| Parallel Mentor Check | Avoid unhealthy emotional dependency | Every mentee should have at least one more mentor or coach — so no single person bears emotional weight. |
| Roleplay Boundary | Practice difficult conversations | Set up mock conversations like: “I feel we’re blurring |

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| | | personal/professional lines — can we reset?” |
| Quarterly Reset Self Talk | Realign emotional and goal expectations | Every 3 months, ask: “Are we still aligned on purpose? Are any emotions taking over objectivity?” |

Emotional Impact If Ignored:

- Mentors may feel exploited, misunderstood, or trapped.
- Mentees may feel abandoned, hurt, or betrayed when mentors withdraw.
- The relationship becomes emotionally codependent — not growth-oriented.

Final Takeaway:

“Mentors are not therapists. Mentees are not children. Keep hearts open, but minds clear.”

Mentorship works best when rooted in mutual respect, not unconscious re-enactments of past relationships. True growth comes from seeing each other as you are — not as who you were missing.

Chapter 8: Mistake #5: Inconsistent Commitment

“The fastest way to break trust in mentorship is to vanish without explanation.”



Mistake: Not showing up, cancelling meetings, or disappearing without communication.

Emotional Impact: Feelings of abandonment, rejection, and inadequacy may arise.

Solution: Respect the rhythm. Even 20 minutes a month, done with sincerity, can build a strong mentorship bond. Value each other's time.

This mistake happens when either mentor or mentee fails to show up consistently — cancelling sessions, going silent for weeks, or failing to follow through on agreed goals. This isn't just a time-management issue; it's a trust issue.

Inconsistency erodes the psychological safety that mentorship requires. It breaks momentum and causes emotional whiplash, especially for mentees who may already be uncertain or vulnerable.

Emotional Impact:

According to Dr. Brené Brown, renowned researcher on vulnerability and trust, “trust is built in very small moments.” Skipping sessions or lack of follow-up creates “microbetrayals” — subtle but repeated cues that “you're not important enough.”

For mentees, this leads to:

- Feelings of abandonment
- Loss of motivation

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- Fear of reaching out again
- For mentors, inconsistent mentees cause:
- Frustration
- Reduced willingness to invest emotionally
- Emotional fatigue and disengagement

Real-Life Example:

Aashik, a college student from Bengaluru, was thrilled to be accepted into a global entrepreneurship mentorship program. His mentor, Anil, was a successful VC executive. In the first session, Anil promised bi-weekly calls and even offered to review Raj's business pitch.

However, over the next two months, Anil postponed three times, once citing travel, another time family emergencies, and eventually went radio silent.

Raj, already battling imposter syndrome, took this personally. He assumed he had failed to impress. He stopped building his idea, withdrew from networking, and shared that he "felt ghosted by someone he respected." Six months later, Anil reached out apologetically, unaware of the emotional damage caused. While they eventually reconnected, the trust — and time — had already taken a hit.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Insight:

- **The Zeigarnik Effect**, from Gestalt psychology, explains that the brain holds onto incomplete experiences more intensely than completed ones. In mentorship, inconsistent follow-up creates a loop of emotional unrest and incomplete learning.
- **Dr. Carol Dweck**, psychologist behind the Growth Mindset theory, stresses the role of consistent feedback and presence in enabling sustained progress. Sporadic mentorship disrupts that very growth.

Action Activities: Staying Consistent in Mentorship

| Action Item | Purpose | How to Apply |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Shared Commitment Calendar | Build structure | Use a shared Google Calendar or app like Calendly. Set recurring sessions monthly or bi-weekly. |

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| Pre-emptive Communication | Reduce anxiety | If cancellation is needed, send a message in advance with a new proposed time. Respect rhythm. |
| Micro-Mentoring Model | Make it sustainable | Even 20–30 minutes per month is enough if done with attention and focus. Quality > Quantity. |
| Mentorship Tracker | Maintain momentum | Maintain a simple document with meeting goals, learnings, and next steps — review it monthly. |
| Quarterly Feedback Check | Realign expectations | Ask: “Is the frequency working for both of us? Are we still adding |

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| | | value to each other?” |
| Fallback Buddy System | Avoid abandonment | If a mentor is unavailable long-term, connect mentee with a peer or co-mentor for continuity. |

What World Mentors Say:

- Bill Campbell, legendary mentor to Google’s leadership, always held weekly check-ins even with his busiest mentees. Larry Page once said: “The consistency of Bill’s presence created a leadership rhythm in our lives.”
- Dr. Kiran Bedi, known for mentoring youth across India, insists on discipline: “If I expect them to show up, I must too. Consistency is the first lesson I teach.”

Final Takeaway:

“Mentorship is less about grand gestures and more about showing up.” - Inconsistent commitment can damage a mentee’s confidence and rob a mentor of their legacy. Consistency doesn’t require hours — it requires respect. If both parties treat the relationship like a sacred ritual, it becomes life-changing.

Chapter 9: Mistake #6 : Fixation on Outcomes, Not Process

“Mentorship isn’t magic. It’s mindset in motion.”



Mistake: Expecting mentorship to directly lead to success — a job, a promotion, or recognition.

Emotional Impact: When tangible results don't show up, disappointment follows.

Solution: Shift to process mindset. The right mentor might not change your resume, but they'll change your mindset — which is far more powerful.

Many mentees enter mentorship expecting tangible rewards: a promotion, a job offer, a recommendation, or public recognition. When those don't arrive quickly, they feel deflated. This goal-chasing mindset ignores the transformative journey mentorship is meant to foster — of mindset, identity, and mastery.

This mistake reduces mentorship to transaction, rather than a journey of trust, reflection, and recalibration.

Emotional Impact

According to Dr. Carol Dweck (Stanford psychologist and creator of the Growth Mindset theory), individuals focused solely on outcomes develop performance anxiety and feel discouraged when external validation is delayed.

In mentorship, this leads to:

- **Disappointment:** “Why isn't my life changing?”
- **Entitlement:** “I did what they said — where's the result?”
- **Erosion of trust:** “Maybe this mentor isn't right for me.”

Real-Life Example:

Tanvi, a talented marketing graduate from Mumbai, connected with a reputed corporate mentor through a startup incubator. In every session, she asked, “Can you refer me to a job?” or “Can you write a LinkedIn recommendation?”

Her mentor, Ramesh, kept guiding her on presentation skills, industry trends, and how to build a brand of value. But Tanvi grew impatient. “All this gyaan isn’t getting me a job,” she told a friend.

Eventually, she stopped showing up.

Ironically, six months later, her portfolio — shaped by Ramesh’s early advice — landed her a top agency role. She wrote him an apology, realizing she had chased the fruit before growing the tree.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Psychological Insight:

Dr. Angela Duckworth (author of *Grit*) reminds us: “The most enduring outcomes are built on process obsession — not end-goal anxiety.”

The goal-gradient effect shows we lose motivation when we perceive goals as far away. Mentorship must be designed with small wins and feedback loops to combat this.

What World Mentors Say:

Ratan Tata once told a young founder: “Don’t build for valuation; build for values. Results follow those who focus on people and purpose.”

Oprah Winfrey, mentored by Maya Angelou, credits her success to “learning how to live, not how to win.”

Action Activities to Avoid This Trap

| Action Item | Purpose | How to Apply |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Set Process Goals, Not Just Outcomes | Reframe success | Instead of “get job,” aim for “build 3 skills in 6 months.” |
| Track Personal Growth Journal | Make invisible growth visible | After each session, write 3 things you learned, 1 thing that shifted in your thinking. |
| Quarterly Reflection Session | Realign expectations | Ask your mentor: “Am I progressing in how I think, decide, communicate?” |

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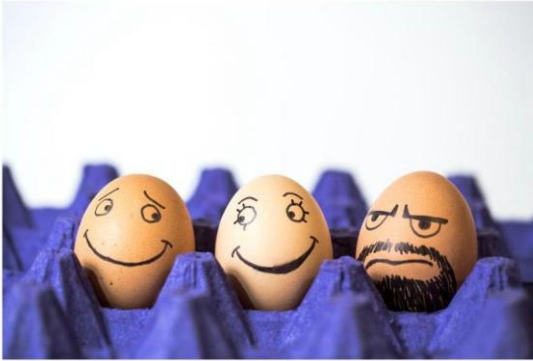
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| Reverse Mirror Exercise | Empower mentee agency | Mentees ask themselves: “What have I done with the guidance given?” |
| Reframe Feedback as Fuel | Reduce outcome obsession | Don’t ask, “Will this get me promoted?” Ask, “What new lens has this opened?” |
| Create a Mentorship Timeline | Track effort, not end | Map progress in mindset, visibility, communication, and confidence across months. |

Final Takeaway:

“The fruit of mentorship isn’t immediate. It’s harvested over seasons.” When mentees chase milestones over maturity, they miss the magic of the transformation. The best mentors don’t hand over opportunities — they prepare you to create them.

Chapter 10: Mistake #7 : Mentors Getting Jealous of Mentees' Growth

“A mentor is a bridge, not a crutch.”



Mistake:

Mentors sometimes unconsciously resist the growth of their mentees — especially when the mentee begins to shine in public, earn accolades, or disrupt traditional thinking. Rather than celebrating the progress, some mentors may withdraw, criticize, or compete, mistaking growth for disloyalty.

Emotional Impact:

The mentee feels torn — between loyalty to their mentor and their own wings of ambition. The mentor, feeling obsolete or bypassed, may spiral into quiet resentment. This fracture leads to mutual disappointment, stunted growth, and emotional exhaustion on both ends.

Solution:

Evolve to stay relevant. In today's world, mentees often belong to the *next generation* — more tech-savvy, more exposed, more agile. To remain a *true* mentor, one must stay ahead of the curve, not behind it. Mentorship is not about hierarchy, but adaptability.

Emotional Insight

Dr. Carol Dweck, author of *Mindset*, identifies this phenomenon as a “fixed identity block” — when mentors tie their value to past achievements rather than continuous learning.

“The best mentors are not those with all the answers, but those who never stop asking better questions.”

When jealousy and resistance emerge:

- **Mentees** begin to shrink or distance themselves to avoid conflict.
- **Mentors** start clinging to relevance by invalidating innovation.
- The relationship becomes transactional — not transformational.

Real-Life Example: Prime Point Srinivasan

At 75, Mr. Srinivasan defies every stereotype of an “ageing mentor.” Rather than resist the pace of change, he runs with it. A pioneer in podcasting in 2005 — before the world even knew what it was — he hosted sessions across India on digital communication and storytelling.

Two decades later, when AI shook the foundations of every industry, Prime Pa didn’t flinch. He attended AI Agents workshops, built AI-enabled workflows, and conducted hundreds of sessions on integrating AI into journalism, PR, governance, and education.

His digital magazine PreSense is thriving for 20 years — not because he clings to the old, but because he listens to the young. He proudly says,

“I learn from youngsters. They are my mentors now in areas I once knew nothing about.”

This humility is what transforms mentorship from instruction to inspiration.

What Great Mentors Say

Dr. Kiran Bedi once told a mentee: “You must outgrow me — that’s how I know I’ve done my job.”

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Bill Campbell, mentor to Google’s top brass, believed: “The moment you start competing with your mentee, you stop being their mentor.”

Mr. Srinivasan often reminds his students: “You command respect only when you’re ahead of the curve. Else, it’s like building castles in the air.”

Psychological Insight

Dr. Daniel Goleman notes that high emotional intelligence includes self-regulation and humility — the ability to manage envy by viewing mentees’ success as a continuation of your own legacy, not a threat.

Mentorship Jealousy is simply unresolved fear of irrelevance.

Action Activities to Stay Evolved and Empower Your Mentees

| Action Item | Purpose | How to Apply |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Quarterly Tech Immersion | Stay ahead of mentees’ learning curve | Enroll in at least one tech-based workshop or tool training every 3 months — AI, podcasting, or domain-specific innovations |

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| Action Item | Purpose | How to Apply |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Reverse Mentoring Circles | Break generational ego barriers | Invite young mentees to teach you tools or trends — flip the traditional mentor-mentee roles for mutual growth |
| Joint Innovation Projects | Encourage co-creation | Work <i>with</i> mentees on real-world initiatives — publications, panels, social impact campaigns |
| Legacy Mapping | Reframe relevance | Mentors list mentees' achievements they contributed to — see their influence multiplied, not diminished |
| Monthly Self-Audit | Combat stagnation | Reflect: "Am I mentoring from growth or from fear?" Adjust learning goals accordingly |
| Digital Playground Hours | Make learning fun again | Spend 2 hours/week experimenting with new tech tools, trends, or |

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| Action Item | Purpose | How to Apply |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|
| | | platforms — with mentees or solo |

Final Takeaway

“The greatest mentors don’t fear being surpassed — they plan for it.”

Mentorship is not a peak to guard, but a ladder to hold. When mentors evolve faster than the world expects, and mentees rise without guilt or fear, the bond becomes immortal.

Let your mentee fly — and show the world that you gave them the sky.

Chapter 11 : Mistake #8 : Neglecting Emotional Safety

“Mentorship is not a boot camp — it’s a greenhouse. Growth doesn’t thrive under pressure alone. It needs warmth too.”



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Mistake: Ignoring power dynamics, personal boundaries, or emotional well-being in the name of “tough love” or “mentorship.”

Emotional Impact: Can lead to burnout, imposter syndrome, and sometimes even trauma.

Solution: Build trust before teaching. Mentorship is not about pushing limits recklessly. It’s about holding a space of growth without judgment.

Mentors who push too hard without building trust, ignore personal boundaries, or use humiliation under the guise of “toughening up” often harm rather than help.

This is often done with good intent — “I’m being real” or “I’m preparing them for the harsh world.”

But unchecked power dynamics, public criticism, or dismissing a mentee’s emotional bandwidth can fracture confidence and trust.

Emotional Impact

- Triggers imposter syndrome (“I’m not good enough”)
- Causes withdrawal or emotional shutdown
- Erodes psychological safety, the foundation of learning
- Leads to mentor-mentee breakdown, sometimes permanently

Psychological Insight

Dr. Amy Edmondson (Harvard Business School), renowned for her work on psychological safety, found that high-performing teams thrive not on relentless pressure, but on an environment where people feel safe to speak, fail, and grow.

Mentorship follows the same rule: No emotional safety = No real learning.

Real-Life Example:

Anjali, a journalism student in Mumbai, was mentored by a renowned senior editor. During editorial reviews, he would harshly criticize her language in front of other interns, calling her “mediocre” and “soft.” His intent was to “toughen her up for the industry.”

Though Anjali respected his credentials, she began dreading work. Her confidence dipped. She stopped pitching ideas. Within three months, she quit — not journalism, but any hope of having a mentor.

It took her years to find her voice again — with the help of a mentor who valued encouragement alongside critique.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

What Global Experts Say:

Dr. Brené Brown, research professor and author of *Dare to Lead*, says:

“Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind. But cruelty disguised as honesty? That’s not leadership — it’s abuse of power.”

Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, said: “If you’re not nurturing the emotional strength of your mentee, you’re just building machines, not humans.”

Action Activities to Ensure Emotional Safety

| Action | Purpose | How-To |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Start with Storytelling | Build human connection | Mentors and mentees share life experiences in the first 1–2 sessions before setting goals |
| Check-In Rituals | Monitor emotional bandwidth | Begin sessions with: “How are you feeling today? Anything you want to bring in or leave out?” |

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| Create a Mentorship Charter | Define safe zones and red flags | List acceptable feedback language, time boundaries, privacy rules, and opt-out clauses |
| Reflect, Don't React | Slow down impulse feedback | Replace "That's not good enough" with "What's one thing you think could be stronger here?" |
| Establish Two-Way Reviews | Feedback loop | Both mentor and mentee evaluate the process monthly for emotional alignment |
| Private over Public | Protect dignity | Correct in private, praise in public — unless agreed otherwise |
| Power Pause | Reaffirm equality | Mentors acknowledge their influence and actively remind |

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| | | mentees they have voice and agency |
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Final Takeaway

“Mentorship is not about pushing people harder — it’s about holding space for them to step into their own strength.” Without emotional safety, even the best technical advice falls flat. True mentorship honors the whole person — their dreams, doubts, limits, and potential.

Chapter 12: Mistake #9 : Overloading the Mentor

“A single lamp cannot light the whole village — don’t expect one mentor to be your entire world.”



Mistake: Expecting one person to be your career guide, therapist, life coach, and best friend.

Emotional Impact: Leads to overwhelm for the mentor and disappointment for the mentee.

Solution: Build a mentor mosaic. Identify different mentors for different roles — one for emotional resilience, one for strategy, one for creativity.

The Mistake

Mentees often look for one perfect mentor — someone who can:

- Give career clarity
- Provide emotional validation
- Solve personal dilemmas
- Be a cheerleader, critic, and confidante — all at once

This unrealistic expectation burns out the mentor, and the mentee ends up disillusioned when their needs go unmet.

Emotional Impact

- **For the mentee:** Disappointment, confusion, and eventual withdrawal when expectations aren't met
- **For the mentor:** Guilt, resentment, or retreat due to emotional overload
- **For the relationship:** Breakdowns, awkward distance, or abrupt endings

Psychological Insight

Dr. Carol Dweck, known for her work on mindset, emphasizes that growth happens best when feedback and support are targeted and contextual — not dumped onto a single figure.

Similarly, Harvard Business Review stresses building a “personal board of advisors” over the “one guru” model.

The brain craves different types of role models to process multiple aspects of identity — especially in adolescence and early career stages.

Real-Life Example:

Rohit, a young startup founder in Calcutta, had immense admiration for a former professor who once encouraged his business ideas. After graduation, Rohit began seeking his professor’s advice on everything — from pricing strategy to co-founder conflict, mental burnout, and even personal relationships.

Initially supportive, the mentor began avoiding calls. Rohit felt rejected, doubted his own worth, and eventually abandoned the mentorship.

Years later, he realized: “My mentor never abandoned me. I simply asked him to play a role he never signed up for.” When Rohit built a network — a mental wellness coach, a

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product strategist, and a peer mentor — the burden reduced, and growth accelerated.

[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Action Activities to Avoid Mentor Overload

| Action | Purpose | How-To |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Role Clarity Check | Define what this mentor is (and isn't) for | Write down: "I go to this mentor for ____." If the list is too long, reallocate |
| Build a Mentor Mosaic | Avoid the "One Mentor Myth" | Find 3–5 individuals: one for skills, one for emotional balance, one for feedback |
| Set Intentional Check-ins | Focus your time together | Book 30-min sessions with 1–2 questions max. Don't "dump" |

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| Use The Ask Filter | Avoid inappropriate dependency | Before reaching out, ask: “Is this within their scope?” “Have I tried solving this first?” |
| Feedback Loops | Prevent silent disengagement | Regularly ask your mentor: “Is this relationship working for you too?” |
| Mentorship Journal | Reduce overtalking and oversharing | Document thoughts before meetings to streamline conversations |
| Diversify Input Sources | Reduce overreliance | Attend workshops, listen to podcasts, join communities — mentors are not the only source of wisdom |

What Global Experts Say:

Marshall Goldsmith, executive coach: “If you want mentorship to work, treat your mentor’s time as more valuable than money.”

Sheryl Sandberg, former COO of Meta: “Mentorship is not magic. You need mentors for different reasons, different seasons.”

Final Takeaway

“You don’t need a guru. You need a galaxy.”

Mentorship isn’t about one person completing your journey — it’s about many people contributing to it, each in their own way.

Chapter 13 : Mistake #10 : Failing to End Gracefully

“Every good story needs a meaningful ending — even in mentorship.”



Mistake: Keeping the relationship going even after it has served its purpose, or ghosting without closure.

Emotional Impact: Unspoken guilt, awkwardness, or unfinished gratitude can linger for years.

Solution: Exit with elegance. Say thank you, reflect on your learnings, and keep the door open for future collaboration. Mentorship, like any relationship, deserves closure.

The Mistake

Many mentorship relationships either:

- Fizzle out with ghosting and silence, or
- Drag on long after their purpose is fulfilled, becoming forced or stagnant

Mentorship, like any human bond, goes through a natural life cycle — and sometimes, closure is the healthiest way forward.

Emotional Impact

- **Mentees** may carry unresolved guilt or feel like they abandoned a mentor
- **Mentors** may feel unappreciated or ghosted, especially when mentees “move on”
- The relationship loses its dignity, often turning into strained communication or avoidance

Psychological Insight

Dr. Nancy Schlossberg, a psychologist who studied adult transitions, highlights that endings are as important as beginnings in any developmental journey. Without closure, people struggle with “residue emotions” — guilt, awkwardness, resentment.

According to Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, closure helps individuals move from “dependence” to “individuation” — the ability to form identity through experience and departure.

Real-Life Example

Ananya, a medical student in India, had a powerful mentor during her entrance exam prep — a retired professor who saw potential in her, tutored her for free, and celebrated her admission.

However, once in medical school, Ananya got busier, stopped responding to messages, and slowly lost contact. Years later, while attending a medical conference, she saw her mentor but couldn’t bring herself to approach him — the guilt was overwhelming.

“I owe him so much. But I didn’t know how to say goodbye, so I said nothing. That’s worse.”

This emotional limbo haunted both of them — something that could’ve been prevented by a graceful ending.

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[The names used in the story are imaginary and the identity of the person is masked]

Action Activities to Exit with Elegance

| Activity | Purpose | How-To |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Write a Thank You Letter | Closure + Appreciation | Express gratitude, mention what you've learned, and how you've grown |
| Plan a Closure Conversation | Mutual transition | Book a call to say: "You've helped me reach this milestone. I'd love to reflect on our journey." |
| Create a Legacy Resource | Extend the impact | Offer to write a testimonial, nominate them for a feature, or recommend their mentorship to others |
| Define Future Touchpoints | Keep the door open | "Can we check in once a year?" or "Would you |

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| | | like to receive my progress updates?" |
| Set an Exit Date | Avoid dragging | Decide together: "Let's wrap up this phase of mentorship after X project/exam/job" |
| Document Key Learnings | Personal clarity | Summarize the 5 biggest lessons you gained, and share them with your mentor |
| Offer Reciprocity | Show maturity | "Is there anything I can help you with?" or "Would you like me to mentor a junior you know?" |
| Acknowledge the Shift | Avoid awkward silence | "Things have changed, and I feel we've reached a natural pause — thank you for everything." |

What Global Experts Say:

Dr. Ramani Durvasula, clinical psychologist: “Healthy closure allows both mentor and mentee to feel complete, not discarded.”

Adam Grant, organizational psychologist: “A great mentor teaches you how to outgrow the relationship with grace — and celebrates it.”

Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Harvard: “Endings are rituals of respect. Without them, we turn meaningful chapters into missed opportunities.”

Final Takeaway

“Don’t let a meaningful relationship fade into silence. Let it close with purpose.”

Mentorships aren’t meant to last forever — but they deserve an ending that honors the beginning. Gratitude is the most powerful exit strategy.

Final Reflection Before wrapping up the 10 common mistakes

Mentorship is not magic — it’s mutual evolution.

When done with clarity, empathy, and commitment, it transforms lives.

When done carelessly, it leaves wounds masked as wisdom.

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If you remember that mentorship is a relationship, not a shortcut, you will not just grow — you'll grow well.

Recurring Emotional Themes

1. Abandonment Anxiety – When the mentor cannot be “everything”
2. Imposter Syndrome – When the mentee feels unworthy of the mentor's time
3. Guilt & Shame – When goals aren't met despite “premium mentorship”
4. Ego Inflation (Mentors) – Over-identifying with mentees' success
5. Hero Worship (Mentees) – Idealizing mentors and losing autonomy

Framework for Emotional Hygiene in Mentorship

| Domain | Mentor Responsibility | Mentee Responsibility |
|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Boundaries | Define limits early | Respect time and space |
| Feedback | Give constructively | Receive without defensiveness |
| Growth | Guide, don't control | Act, don't expect magic |
| Closure | Signal when ready | Express gratitude and reflect |
| Diversity | Recommend others | Build diverse mentor support |

Chapter 14: recognizing the Mentors Around You

From Unseen Hands to Unsung Guides: The Hidden Mentorships That Shape Us



Mentors Without Titles

In our pursuit of “the perfect mentor,” we often look for grand titles — CEOs, life coaches, gurus, or industry giants. But mentorship is not a job role. It’s a relationship of transmission — of experience, wisdom, values, and perspective.

As the late Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard’s Project Zero observed in his research on human development, “We are most deeply shaped not by formal instruction, but by meaningful human encounters that subtly alter our thinking, often without our awareness.” Mentorship, thus, often emerges from people who never call themselves mentors.

- A childhood friend who taught you courage in the face of bullying.
- A bus conductor who treated every passenger with equal respect, teaching you dignity.
- A domestic helper who modelled resilience without saying a word.

They never published a self-help book or delivered a TED Talk. But their actions etched deep lessons into your soul.

Neuroscience backs this too. Mirror neurons — the brain’s empathy circuits — get activated more by real-life behavioural modelling than verbal instruction. In short: we learn by witnessing, not just listening.

The Everyday Guide

Dr. Carol Dweck, known for her work on Growth Mindset, emphasizes that we grow most when we believe learning is constant and everyone is a potential teacher. In Indian culture, this is beautifully encapsulated in the concept of:

“Aachaaryat padamaadatte, paadam shishya swamedhayaa,

Paadam sa brahmachaaribhya, paadam kaalakramenacha.”

(You learn one quarter from your teacher, one quarter from your own intelligence, one quarter from peers, and one quarter through life over time.)

This implies that mentorship is plural and participatory.

That quiet colleague who taught you how to deal with criticism?

The aunt who showed you how to manage household finances in silence?

They're not on LinkedIn with #Mentor tags. But they were your everyday guides — if only you noticed.

Noticing Wisdom in Unlikely Places

What separates those who grow from those who stagnate is not luck — but attentiveness. The ability to mine gold from dust.

“When the student is ready, the teacher appears” — the proverb is not magical, it’s neurological and attitudinal.

Let’s take examples:

- Ratan Tata, despite being mentored by J.R.D. Tata, often said he learned as much from factory floor workers as from boardroom executives.
- Oprah Winfrey, though globally mentored by Maya Angelou, also speaks of how her grandmother’s quiet sacrifices were her first lessons in leadership and grace.
- Dr. Abdul Kalam drew inspiration from his school teacher, who made him see the stars beyond the sky, long before ISRO existed.

These figures taught through presence, not presentation. And recognizing them requires not an Ivy League degree — but an open heart and alert mind.

Call to Action for Readers

Ask yourself:

- Who shaped your thinking even once in a meaningful way?
- Who believed in you when you didn't believe in yourself?
- Who showed you how to live, not just how to succeed?

Make a list. These are your invisible mentors.

Honor them. Learn from them again. Maybe even thank them — it might change both your lives.

Daily Mentorship Audit Matrix

A mindful tool to track, honor, and grow everyday moments of guidance, support, and transformation “Small acts of mentorship, when done with intention, create ripples that can transform societies.” — Adapted from Viktor Frankl

| Area | Questn | Example Entry | Emotion Felt | Lesson Captured |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Mentorship Received | Who offered me wisdom, clarity, or | My teammate encouraged me to speak up | Empowerd | Speak with self-belief even in rooms that feel intimidating |

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| | support today? | in a meeting | | |
| Mentorship Given | Did I guide or uplift someone today (even subtly)? | I reassured my child during her dance audition | Warmth | A calm word at the right time builds courage in others |
| Unspoken Mentors | Did I observe someone whose actions taught me something today? | A cleaner who hummed while working | Calm | Grace and dignity lie in how we approach our work |

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| <p>Missed Moment</p> | <p>Was there a time I could have mentored or asked for help, but didn't?</p> | <p>I stayed silent when a junior colleague looked overwhelmed</p> | <p>Regret</p> | <p>Don't withhold kindness due to overthinking</p> |
| <p>Gratitude Reflection</p> | <p>Whom am I grateful for today in my journey, past or present?</p> | <p>My old school teacher who believed in me</p> | <p>Deep warmth</p> | <p>Never underestimate early validation</p> |

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| Intent for Tomorrow | What mentoring value will I embody or seek tomorrow? | I will listen with patience when my friend shares her worries | Hopeful | Listening itself can be mentorship |
|----------------------------|--|---|---------|------------------------------------|

How to Use the Matrix

- **Frequency:** Use daily or weekly as a reflective ritual (5–10 mins a day).
- **Medium:** Can be a part of your personal journal, team retrospectives, or classroom/organizational learning circles.
- **Goal:** To build a culture of mentorship — one moment, one conversation, one person at a time.

Pro Tips from Psychology & Leadership Experts:

- Dr. Brené Brown: “Clear is kind.” Use this matrix to develop emotional clarity about where you stand as a mentor or mentee each day.

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- Marshall Goldsmith: “What got you here won’t get you there.” This matrix helps you uncover blind spots and evolve.
- Dr. Daniel Goleman: Emotional intelligence is built in micro-moments. Use this audit to become more aware of them.

If everyone in the world spent just 10 minutes a day reflecting on how they lifted or were lifted — we wouldn’t need revolutions. We’d already be in one.

Final Reflection

In a world obsessed with influencers, let’s not forget the influential — the quietly transformative people who walk beside us without fanfare.

Because the truest mentors don’t make you follow them — they make you find yourself.

Chapter 15 : Tough Love and Transformation – When Resistance meets relentless guidance



In the sacred dance of mentorship, not every step is smooth. Sometimes, the music clashes. The mentee

resists. The mentor persists. And somewhere between emotional pushback and spiritual patience, transformation begins.

This chapter is very close to my heart as I have always been this mentee who gave very high level of resistance to the mentorship offered by Srinivasan Sir. Though he had a very grand plan for me, I always had a reason for not executing his vision. And many a times it has been a frustrating experience for both of us, I should admit.

But what created a huge shift is his constant faith in me and his persistence in not giving up on me, All I can say is - I have been lucky!

Part I: The Resistant Mentee — The Raw Stone Before the Sculpture

Resistance in mentees is not a flaw — it is often a sign of untapped potential, tangled with fear, ego, or past failures. As Carl Jung once said, “That which we resist persists — until it teaches us.”

Why Do Mentees Resist?

1. Fear of Unmasking: True mentorship demands vulnerability. Some mentees fear losing control or admitting they don't know it all.

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2. Comfort in Mediocrity: A plateau, even if painful, feels safer than a steep climb. A good mentor challenges this stagnation.
3. Impostor Syndrome: Deep down, many don't believe they deserve to grow — so they sabotage the mentorship subconsciously.

Real-Life Example: The Reluctant Prodigy

Consider Sachin Tendulkar, who admitted that his legendary coach Ramakant Achrekar was not always gentle. Achrekar didn't coddle; he insisted on discipline, drills, and repeat performances — sometimes standing behind him during matches to prevent distractions. Sachin didn't always enjoy the pressure, but he later acknowledged that this “impossible discipline” shaped his greatness.

Lesson: Resistance is raw clay. The mentor is both the potter and the fire. What emerges is art — only if both stay through the heat.

Part II: The Tough Mentor — The Sculptor With Calloused Hands

Tough mentors often walk the tightrope between rigour and rigidity. They may seem emotionless, even harsh, but beneath the sharp edges lies the softest intention: to raise not just achievers, but leaders with moral spine.

Why Are Some Mentors 'Difficult'?

1. They see what others don't: A mentor's vision often stretches far beyond the mentee's self-image.
2. They refuse shortcuts: Good mentors won't let mentees bypass pain, for they know pain polishes.
3. They believe in legacy over likeability: A true mentor isn't here to be popular — but to be pivotal.

Real-Life Example: Sanjay Leela Bhansali & Rani Mukerji

When Rani Mukerji was cast in *Black* (2005), she wasn't prepared for what director Sanjay Leela Bhansali demanded. Portraying a deaf-blind character meant stripping away all her learned expressions and mannerisms. Bhansali was relentlessly precise — often redoing scenes 40–50 times, refusing to praise even when the shot was technically good. He would pause the shoot if Rani wasn't in the right emotional zone, pushing her to go deeper, not perform — but become.

Rani later said in interviews that she would cry in her room during filming, questioning herself constantly. But Bhansali never softened. He believed in the potential he saw, not in momentary comfort. The result? Rani's performance in *Black* is still considered one of the greatest in Indian

cinematic history — and one she herself calls her turning point as a serious actor.

Lesson: A tough mentor does not indulge applause. They carve through your self-doubt, not to hurt — but to help you become what even you didn't believe was possible.

Part III: How to Navigate Tough Mentorship Dynamics

Whether you're a mentor facing resistance or a mentee enduring intensity, here's how to handle it:

For Mentees:

- Pause before reacting: Ask “Is this discomfort or disrespect?” If it's the former, stay and grow.
- Journal your resistance: What patterns repeat? What feedback stings? That's where growth hides.
- Initiate honest conversations: Tough mentors respect clarity. Ask for feedback openly.

For Mentors:

- Don't mistake resistance for rebellion: The mentee may not be defiant — just afraid.
- Balance push and presence: Challenge fiercely, but make space for grace.
- Self-reflect: Are you mentoring the person, or projecting your past?

Final Reflection: Iron Sharpens Iron

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Mentorship, at its core, is alchemy. One heart chisels another. One mind provokes another. And one life transforms another. Resistance is not the enemy — it is the rite of passage.

If you're the mentee, don't flee at the first spark of discomfort — you might be standing at the threshold of your own brilliance.

If you're the mentor, don't give up on the uncut diamond — a little more pressure might reveal the shine.

Action Exercises:

“The Friction is the Fire” Journal Prompts:

1. When did you last resist a mentor's advice? Why?
2. What “tough” feedback actually made you stronger in hindsight?
3. Can you list 3 traits in your mentor you misunderstood initially, but now value?
4. As a mentor, what part of you feels impatient or reactive toward a mentee? Can you trace the root?

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| Activity Name | Who Does It | Description | Outcome |
|--|--------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Shadow Without Question Week | Mentee | Follow mentor's guidance without questioning for a week. | Reduces resistance and fosters trust. |
| Letter of Unsaid Gratitude | Mentee | Write a private letter of gratitude reflecting on mentor's indirect influence. | Encourages empathy and reflection. |
| Mirror Mentoring Log | Mentee | Log daily mentor actions and personal emotional reactions. | Improves emotional intelligence. |
| One Step Back Listening Session | Mentor | Allow mentee to speak freely; ask what's holding them back. | Creates psychological safety. |

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| Silent Challenges | Mentor | Assign a tough task without guidance; observe problem-solving. | Promotes self-agency and growth. |
| Spot the Spark Activity | Mentor | Recognize and highlight an unnoticed strength in mentee. | Boosts confidence and motivation. |
| Resistance Diary Exchange | Both | Each logs resistance moments for a week, then exchange. | Builds trust and clarifies conflicts. |
| Reverse Mentorship Day | Both | Mentee teaches mentor a skill to balance dynamics. | Enhances mutual respect. |
| Shared Public Commitment | Both | Make a joint public commitment with | Increases follow-through and ownership. |

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| | | shared accountability. | |
| Mentor Mosaic Map | Both | Map different mentors fulfilling unique developmental roles. | Broadens support network and reduces dependency. |

Chapter 16: Coming to an End

This final chapter is a curated summary of the most impactful lessons from mentors and mentees worldwide. These takeaways are not meant to merely conclude the book, but to ignite a movement — one where mentorship becomes a way of life, not just a phase. My deepest intention is to contribute to a world where “learning” is not confined to classrooms, but becomes an ever-evolving, lifelong pursuit.

Common Learnings for Mentors

1. Trust First, Then Train

Vajpayee’s trust in Shakti Sinha, despite his youth, allowed him to grow into a bureaucratic leader.

Ratan Tata’s support for young startups before they “proved” themselves shows belief is the greatest motivator.

2. Take Blame, Share Credit

Prof. Satish Dhawan taking blame during the SLV-3 failure and letting Dr. Kalam shine in success is mentorship in humility.

3. See Potential Before Proof

Prime Point Srinivasan spotted leadership qualities in students long before they did, assigning real-world roles they didn’t yet feel “ready” for — but grew into.

4. **Mentor Values, Not Just Skills**

Sanjay Leela Bhansali shaped Rani Mukerji's patience and discipline, not just acting chops.

Dr. Kiran Bedi taught assertiveness and civic duty — not merely policy.

5. **Be Consistent, Not Controlling**

Pullela Gopichand emphasized daily discipline and emotional stability over external fame. His approach was process-driven, not ego-driven.

6. **Use Platforms to Uplift**

Maya Angelou didn't mentor Oprah through coaching sessions but through consistent encouragement and storytelling — powerful, non-prescriptive upliftment.

Common Learnings for Mentees

1. **Trust the Process, Even When You Don't Understand It**

Dr. Kalam, Rani Mukerji, and mentees of Prime Point Srinivasan didn't always see the end goal — but their mentors did. Trust mattered more than clarity.

2. **Be Ready to Say Yes**

Most transformative opportunities — Kalam meeting Dr. Kalam, or a mentee becoming an anchor at the Sansad

Ratna Awards — began with a “Yes” to something unknown.

3. **Absorb Values, Not Just Instructions**

Every mentee mentioned — from Jaswant Singh to Sindhu — grew by observing, internalizing the mentor’s way of thinking, not just what they were told.

4. **Stay Humble in Growth**

All major mentees (like Saina Nehwal or Dr. Kalam) retained humility even after global recognition, crediting their mentors openly.

5. **Mentorship Is Everywhere**

Many leaders had multiple mentors — some from family, some from work, and others from books or personal reflection. Mentees learned to extract mentorship from life itself.

6. **Reverse Mentorship Happens Too**

Ratan Tata, Vajpayee, and Dr. Bedi often listened and learned from their juniors. Great mentees offered insights back, making it a two-way journey.

The Unified Message

Mentorship is not a transaction. It’s a relationship rooted in belief, nurtured through values, and matured through shared journeys.

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For mentors, the call is to uplift, protect, and guide without ego. For mentees, it is to surrender, absorb, and grow with gratitude and grit.

These stories show us that leadership is seeded by mentorship — and harvested through trust, patience, and purpose.

As you turn the final page, remember — the true legacy of a mentor or mentee is not measured in accolades, titles, or social media applause. It is measured in the quiet ripple of lives transformed, in the confidence you ignite, and in the courage you pass forward.

May you walk away from this book not just informed, but inspired — to seek guidance with humility, to offer it with grace, and to become the kind of person who uplifts others simply by believing in their extraordinary potential.

In a world obsessed with visibility, choose impact. Here's to your journey — from being mentored, to mentoring, to becoming a lighthouse for many more to come.

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About this book:

A transformative guide on real mentorship—blending personal stories, timeless wisdom, and practical insights to help readers grow from ordinary to extraordinary through human connection.

About the author



Sukruti Narayanan is a dynamic communication professional whose multifaceted journey spans education, telecom, technology, media, and entrepreneurship. Based in Sydney, Australia, she is the Founder of RAISE ME, a not-for-profit initiative empowering youth through early industry exposure, and heads The Hustler Journalist, spotlighting everyday changemakers. Currently serving as Global Head of Partnerships for ShakthiSAT—the world's first all-women-led lunar space mission representing 108 countries—she also advises PreSense and Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI). A celebrated host for popular TV/YouTube shows and columnist for various digital and print media, she made her Telugu film debut as co-heroine. Having led over 80 national and international events, set world records, and shaped acclaimed global marketing campaigns, she founded the Global Digital Journalists Forum, championing ethical, digital-first journalism. With an MBA in Public Relations and ongoing legal and digital business studies, she was honoured with PRCI's "Young Visionary" Award and is celebrated among India's top women in technology. She has authored a book titled “Excuses to Empowerment” on procrastination.