

ACTIVE MENTORING

**Knowledge and Skills for
Automotive Technicians
Who Are Mentors and Interns**

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Welcome to Mentor-Intern Training. The purpose of this book and this training experience is to prepare you with the information and some activities which will help you carry out your role as Mentor or Intern. Mentors and Interns are doing their training together because each needs to understand the other's role. Also, everyone needs the same information to effectively participate. For example, all race car drivers need to know the track rules and signal systems, both the old timers and the new rookies!

This manual –and your instructor – will be giving instruction on some shared activities.

The manual is set up with headlines, bold type and regular type. After completing the training, a review of the manual headlines and bold type can be useful in the future.

This manual is yours to keep. Make any notes or marks in this book which will be helpful to you.

During this training you are always able to ask questions. There are no “tests” or “quizzes” during the training.

THE MENTOR IS A CAREER COACH

The Mentor will help the Intern learn the profession by:

- Setting a good example. Showing and explaining how to prepare for technician work.
- Explain how to engage a repair job from the first contact with the customer. Proper documentation for payment purposes. Correct warranty compliance from the first test drive and vehicle return to the customer.
- Explain and demonstrate how to order parts and manage “cores” when required.
- Explain how to get proper authorization for unexpected repairs or observed problems when vehicle safety is a factor.
- Understand and adapt attitudes and behaviors which will encourage questions from the intern.
- Help the intern manage mistakes that he/she may make in ways that teach preventative actions in the future and in ways which leave the intern freely encouraged and educated rather than scolded.
- Maintain heightened awareness of the intern’s strengths and particular work skills. Then provide feedback regarding these professional strengths.
- Engage in conversations which teach and reinforce the attitudes of career professionalism.

THE INTERN MUST BE AN ACTIVE PART OF THE MENTOR-INTERN RELATIONSHIP

As an Intern I must:

- Understand that I need to learn by accepting direction as education not as criticism.
- Be truthful with my abilities, always proceeding carefully so I do not exceed my abilities.
- Be serious minded while at work, avoiding “horseplay” and teasing even though others may engage in this behavior.
- Be productive – stay focused on the work at hand and be efficient with my time.
- Appreciate and understand that my behavior and my attitude are intertwined with my mentor. My conduct reflects on my mentor as well as my school and the general population of other young people.
- Understand that there may be others in the work space who worry that the reason for my presence is to take their job away from them, or will, by my more up-to-date technical training embarrasses them by knowing more than they do.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A JOB AND A CAREER

The difference between “job” and “career” is defined by how a person thinks about work not by the work itself. When what one does is also a statement of who they are, we say their job is part of their identity, or their reputation. This is what distinguishes a “job” from a “career.”

Your internship is a full dress rehearsal of what the life of a professional automotive technician is like. Your mentor will guide you every step of the way. Your mentor will be there to answer the daily questions you may have and to show you how to fit into the “company culture.”

PROFESSIONALISM REQUIRES MORE THAN TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Automotive technicians who are successful in their profession have excellent people skills. Their interactions with customers and other employees are productive and free from distress.

This writer believes the training which auto technicians already have is an excellent foundation for understanding people and developing excellent people skills.

Consider the automatic transmission in a late model gasoline engine car. I will engage in a very careful, exactly accurate description. A competent technician must know every detail as to how all of the parts work together. In an accurate description, every word must be descriptive, no global terms or slang allowed! **The accuracy of an explanation can be no better than the accuracy of each word.** For example, how useful is the phrase “screwed up” really? More on the importance of word accuracy later. An automatic transmission is not “automatic.” Automatic is just a vague marketing term. What follows is a better, more complete explanation. Accuracy has no short cuts. Think in systems!

1. The Sensor system provides information:
 - a. Vehicle speed sensor
 - b. RPM sensor
 - c. Ambient temperature sensor
 - d. Shift lever selection sensor
 - e. Others

2. The power train control receives information from all of the sensors, then using instructions the design engineers have stored in the computer memory, the PROM (Permanent Read Only Memory.) The computer “decides” what signals to send the transmission in order to control solenoids and oil valves which in turn operate a group of mechanical mechanisms which effectly accept the rotational energy of the engine and transfer this energy to the rotational output of the drive axles.

3. The heart of the transmission internal operating system is the main hydraulic pump which provides high pressure oil which is used to operate the hydraulic pistons which will engage clutches and/or bands such that the transmission gear clusters will give different gear ratios thus keeping the engine input RPMs in range while the axel RPMs are ever increasing, or reversing. This ratio can also be selected by the driver. A further complication, which is why we need the multitude of sensors and the computer, is that input RPM and output RPM are not the only factor. Under some driving conditions very high torque values are required, sometimes lower torque values. Vehicle speed is not the only factor.

The transmission hydraulic system also provides lubrication and temperature stabilization for the transmission.

The internal hydraulic system is controlled by electric valves which direct oil flow. The electric valves, including the one which will lock the torque converter are activated by the signals sent from the engine control module.

SO, THE AUTOMATIC TRANSMISSION IS NOT “AUTOMATIC.”

The automatic transmission is a system of sensors, a computer, electric valves, hydraulic valves, and mechanical parts. Now, here is the point of this example beyond accurate communication.

If something is wrong with the drivability of a car, note that the **able technician must understand all of what we just explained** if he/she is to diagnose how the transmission may be part of the drivability complaint.

For example, if the car shudders and stalls when coming to a stop, yet starts easily in neutral, but stalls as soon as the shift lever is moved to Drive or Reverse, then the able technician suspects the torque converter is remaining in the “locked” mode. Understanding all of the above transmission explanation not only helps with the suspicion of the problem but helps in knowing all of the possible reasons why the torque converter may be remaining in the locked mode. Simply saying “the transmission is screwed up” does not lead to purposeful and meaningful problem solving.

At this point in our training you may be thinking “enough of the way over explaining the details. I understand already!” Be encouraged by this truth: the professional knows and understands the details.

The popular phrase “people skills” is a lot like saying “automatic transmission.” The ability to get along productively and in a satisfying way with others requires a detailed understanding of how people and our interactions with one another actually function. This kind of understanding is called “Insight.”

IT'S USEFUL TO KNOW HOW PEOPLE WORK

Cars have become an important, functional, part of everyday life for most people in our culture. If something is wrong with our car, we have a problem! In addition, for many one's car is a kind of extension of "self-hood," or, psychologically speaking, our personal identity. "My car expresses who I am. It's like a part of me!"

So, it is not enough to know how cars work. The professional automotive technician has to know a lot about the workings of people as well. Dealing with the customer is a very important and powerful part of the professional auto technician's career. In fact, the service writer, parts supplier, sometimes another technician, and in a dealership setting even the customer's salesperson may be involved. All of these participants have their professionalism, their own identity on the line. Now, let's add one more reality. There is almost always a significant amount of money attached to automotive service and repair. When the customer has to pay money over a small misunderstanding such as a different idea on how repairs should be accomplished, this can lead to a big argument and distress for both the customer and the technician.

For example, there will be the customer who is sure "you are the one" who caused the climate control system to fail because "it worked before I had the brakes done." Or the service writer who asks you to stay late so you can finish his neighbor's car and, of course, some of your friends who will ask you to "help" change the alternator on their car in the driveway "because it will only take a few minutes." Oh, yes, did we mention the documentation of your work on vehicles? There are warranty forms, documentation of recall service, documentation of core returns, and then that occasional callback that will have to be handled and documented.

Where are we going with this?

We are about to explain something you already know. In fact, it's "common sense." However, as a Mentor and as an Intern understanding the **details** will move us from amateur to professional. We will illuminate the deeper meaning of what appears completely obvious in the following few sentences.

The 3/8 drive, 10 mm socket in your tool chest is always the "same." The socket "doesn't care" if it is helping to remove water pump bolts in a very dirty, hard to reach location or the nut from an alternator output post that is very clean and so easy to reach!

Simple truth here. People have emotions, tools do not. Again obvious, but important. The **same person** can have **many different emotions**.

Another truth about people. Each of us can be a spectator and a participant at the same time. You have always known this but I want to have a very clear picture. You can be playing basketball, making a free shot, and evaluating your performance at the same time. It was a good shot. It was a bad shot.

The result of all of this is we have not only the emotions of other people to manage, we have our own emotions to manage

We **can feel delighted and pleased** with ourselves when we finally discover the cause of that intermittent problem and then feel **very frustrated and even angry** when an exhaust manifold bolt breaks, leaving most of the bolt in the head. (Of course, it is always the bolt which is the most difficult to reach!)

Every profession has its own elements that can be applied to the world in general. For the auto technician, the understanding and logic that guides him or her through technical issues and problems can be applied to understanding people as well.

THE BEST WAY TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS IS TO UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE WORK

People come in a wide variety. But, like automobiles, within this variety there is a lot of the same stuff. The best way to get along with others and to find happiness in your own life is to understand how people work. After all, you are a person first and a technician second.

For the purpose of this training, we will describe people as having four personal components -

1. The “thinking” component
2. The “things I’ve already learned” component
3. The “this is really important to me” component
4. The “emotional” component

THINKING IS TALKING TO OURSELVES

Clear and correct thinking must be using exactly accurate words when we hear our own voice in our head. Hearing our voice in our head is simply called **self-talk**. One cannot think about something successfully if the self-talk thoughts are not made up of accurate words.

ALL PROBLEM SOLVING REQUIRES ACCURATE THINKING

The delight of shared understanding in technology is that we can give really clear examples. For example, for our friend to say “My brakes are all messed up.” can only give us a global message that “something is wrong.” but if that same friend were to say “You know, I get this awful grinding sound and my brake pedal actually feels like it’s pulsing up and down when I stop.” Now we have much more “problem-solving” information.

When it comes to dealing with other people what is actually inaccurate thinking can **seem sensible** when in reality it is **not**.

“Well, he’s such a jerk. Yeah, and he’s stubborn and stupid too.” No real information here. But it may seem like there is. What does happen is this. Such nonsensical phrases provide “cues” to the pre-conscious part of our thinking. Cues to the mind are so important we will deal with them in detail. Before we can do that, we need more instruction. Sort of like in the old style of ignition, “dwell angle” has little meaning if one does not have a complete understanding of moving points driven ignition systems. More about **cues** later.

MUCH OF OUR THINKING DEPENDS ON THE THINGS WE HAVE ALREADY LEARNED

Almost all of our thinking depends on information we have already learned. You could not imagine your kitchen sink if you had not already seen it. The “things I’ve already learned” component is very powerful in our daily living. One of the unusual qualities of this component is that much of the time we don’t even know it’s in operation. Let’s use driving a car as an example. Most of our actions, once we have learned to drive, seem “automatic” to us. We don’t think “I have to move my arms in a circle with the steering wheel to turn right.” Instead, we “just do it.” Yet we know that if our arms and legs were not directed by our brains, there would be no meaningful motion. We are able to drive because we have learned what to think in order to drive.

“AUTOMATIC” ACTIONS HAPPEN BECAUSE OF PRE-CONSCIOUS THINKING

We do these things “without thinking” based on what we have learned and experienced from an earlier time. In other words “We have done this before.”

Pre-conscious is sort of like memory, but more complicated. You remember where you last parked your car but also when to sing “Happy Birthday” and how it goes. This information is in your pre-conscious. So is the definition of loyalty and the “rule” for using different applications on a cell phone.

An important understanding of our **pre-consciousness lessons** that we have learned is that **we do not know what all of them are**. We need a “cue” to call up what we have stored in our pre-conscious mind. Do oil and water mix? See, you weren’t thinking about that until the “cue.”

One of the most important parts of the things we have already learned component is a whole group of thoughts called **expectations**.

MOST EXPECTATIONS ARE PRE-CONSCIOUS

For, example, if you go into any of the popular fast food restaurants, you would be surprised to see linen tablecloths and a wait staff. Just not what you **expected**.

Expectations have a great deal to do with satisfaction. A customer's car is running very rough. He "limps" to the repair shop expecting a complex and costly repair. You discover a damaged secondary wire. It's an easy reach, the repair is quick and much below his "expectations" in cost. We have a very satisfied customer.

Expectations are mostly invisible. We cannot say what they all are. Just too many until a cue comes along. If right now, in a part of this training, you were asked to trade shoes with someone, you would realize immediately this **is not what you expected**. You would probably feel uneasy and probably just not do it. If, as a part of this training the instructor announced that every participant would get a 100 dollar bill for lunch allowance, you would be happy and **surprised**. This was not expected. (It is also not going to happen. Just an example. Sorry.)

WE EXPECT THINGS FROM OURSELVES

There is another very powerful way expectations impact our personal and professional lives. Just as we expect things regarding a fast food restaurant, we expect things from ourselves. We, as human beings, have a very interesting quality due to our intellect. We can be participants and observers at the same time. If you are shooting a basketball free throw, you can actually throw the ball and also watch yourself do this and at the same time evaluate yourself. That was a great shot." or "That was a pretty bad shot." Remember, we also have expectations of others. When the traffic signal turns green what do you expect the driver in front of you to do? What about the driver approaching the red signal on the cross street which is part of the interaction? That is so much of **what traffic laws** are all about. **Making sure every driver has known expectations** given a particular traffic situation. Thus "everyone knows" what to do to avoid a collision and to keep traffic moving effectively.

ATTITUDES

One last concept regarding our pre-conscious mind. Something called **Attitude**.

Everyone tells you "Have a good attitude," but never tells you exactly what that means or **how** to get a good attitude. With the use of accurate language, however, we can not only explain attitude, we can also explain how to instill attitudes.

ACTIVITY

A question for you to answer with your self-talk. Only to yourself in your head.

Question. With a usual driver, same model car, which will be the most fuel efficient? Stick shift or automatic shift? Why?

O.K. Now share your answer with someone and listen to their answer.

Here is the point. No need to figure out which answer may be correct or to sell your point of view. The point is we as intelligent human beings develop **theories** about things.

Simply defined, your **attitude is your pre-conscious theory about any given situation.**

Consider customers who have an **attitude** about car repairs. Here is a common attitude. "The car really doesn't need the air filter and a coolant flush. It's really O.K. They just try to sell you stuff to get your money."

Of course, you know about this popular customer **attitude**, which is why the professional auto technician explains thoroughly any suggested repairs. For example, show the customer the dirty air filter.

A professional auto technician has an **attitude** that **expects** customers will need to be educated; therefore, the auto technician is **not angry** when this time and process are executed. In truth, everyone has a theory and opinion about almost everything - things and other people, including what a professional auto technician is supposed to do. When we put a whole group of these theories and opinions together around a single situation, like the role of professional technician, we have an **attitude**. I will use a simple single concept example to better illustrate how attitude changes our behavior.

Here is the situation. You have located and purchased on e-Bay a hard to find Holly Carburetor for a good friend's 1966 small block Chevy. The seller is meeting you at a half-way point, a McDonald's 1 ½ hours away. The seller explains he is on his way to a wedding so the two of you must be "on time." If you are not there he will not wait for you lest he be late for the wedding. Things are fine, you have left a comfortable time buffer, but now there is an unusually long construction hold up. You are finally on the other side of it, but now, if no other hold ups, will have just enough time to get to the restaurant.

Same situation. You now realize the meeting place is closer than you thought. You will have half an hour time frame but will be almost 2 hours early.

Now, what is your attitude as a driver in each situation? First situation is “Hurry up, hurry up!” You will not be reckless with your driving (hopefully), but not very polite either.

In the second situation the attitude is “Plenty of time, plenty of time.” You now are in the mode of polite behavior. Let the other driver go first in a construction merger, no need to slide in first, etc.

Your **attitude** has a major impact on your **driving behavior**.

UNDERSTANDING WILL HELP US BE BETTER PROBLEM SOLVERS

Many of our personal attitudes have been installed and adopted by each of us due to our mere presence in our environment. A profound example is the native language you speak. This writer did not decide to speak English, The reason I speak English is because I was surrounded by English speaking people. It’s that simple. This environment of observing attitudes can be helpful, confining or even toxic. One can be in an environment where a lot of the “wrong things” are taught and thus learned. The result – toxic attitudes that yield bad behavior.

One of the main reasons for this mentoring program has to do with learning the attitudes professional auto technicians adopt. Here is one to think about. “A vehicle is no better than the last technician who worked on it.” What do you think? Is this a true or false statement?

OUR THINKING IS INFLUENCED BY THE THINGS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO US – OUR VALUE SYSTEM

As we get older, we begin to accumulate things and ideas which are very important to us. Do you have prized possessions? Of course you do. However, notice that what are considered “prized possessions” will differ from person to person.

For those items that we consider prized possessions, certain things are true. We will spend money on them, we will put forth effort for them, we may endure discomfort and/or work hard to create, maintain, and use them, and we will be consistent over time in the process of enjoying them.

Ideas, rules of personal conduct, and concepts can also be prized possessions. We hold dear certain ideas of “how things should be.” For example, how would you feel if you caught a friend snooping through your personal things and then taking something? This is behavior you would **not** expect from a friend. For most of us, the definition of a “friend” would be a person who is honest, loyal, and trustworthy. Our definition of friendship is a prized possession, and is part of our value system.

When people make plans to pursue a desire or a goal, our value system and our experience (the “things” I have already learned” component) get put together. The outcome of this thinking is the emotion of desire and a plan to pursue that desire.

The professional automotive technician has a desire to pursue or carry out a repair. Of course, the knowledge of how to do the repair and the skill of **performing** the repair are also essential elements. Notice, however, that without the **desire** to do the repair **correctly**, knowledge and skill becomes meaningless. **“I desire to do it correctly is the heart of personal pride.”**

SATISFACTION COMES FROM VALUING OUR WORK

The level at which you **value** your role as an automotive technician will be the most important factor in determining the **quality** of your work and your level of **satisfaction** in your career. The **valuing** of our work is how our job becomes a **profession**. When we value a role, then it becomes part of our identity. It is who we are. It is **what we stand for**. This **valuing** is our own person supervision on the job. Think about it. Only you know what you are doing with the vehicle in your service bay. Professionals are always their own supervisors. To say it simply, we have **pride** in our work because our work becomes the public announcement of **who we are**. One test of “job well done” is the willingness to publically put your name on it. Every Intern must remember the Mentor must take the public accountability for all work performed. May each of you be proud to do so!

EMOTIONS COME FROM WHAT WE THINK, NOT THE EVENT

Our **emotions** come from what we think an event means, not from the event itself.

Our emotions are stimulated by our thinking, conscious and pre-conscious. Imagine someone is serving you a piece of pie and suddenly coughs all over it just before serving it to you. Now he could tell you that everything is fine, he’s just had a week’s worth of antibiotics and can’t possibly have any “germs.” Doesn’t matter. What happens to your appetite? A really big “No thank you!”

Look at what happens. Someone coughing on your food is a **“cue.”**

You see it, you hear it. The pre-conscious brain, the “things I have already learned” component, immediately tells you a story about “germs.” You don’t actually hear this story in your head, but your **emotion** component does and you lose your appetite and you **feel** that “Yuck.”

Emotion itself is a physical event in our bodies. When we are nervous, our heart rate speeds up, we may perspire, and we tend to “fidget” more. When we are happy, we move more easily, we laugh, we often talk louder and more rapidly.

The ability to **express** our emotions is separate from our ability to **experience** our emotions. We can **say** what we think and we **can show** our emotions or **we hide** what we think, and **hide** what we feel.

How to express our emotions, especially in the work place, is very important. In fact, when people have problems in the work place, it is almost always because of how they express their emotions rather than incompetent skills.

WORK CAN BRING STRONG EMOTIONS

One of the most important roles Mentors have is to help us understand the source of our emotions and how to express them in useful ways and appropriate ways, especially at work.

Now we have enough background information and are able to give a complete and accurate description of how people work, just as we did with the automatic transmission.

Keep in mind the **value** of using accurate words. I will explain the cognitive therapy model of how people work using the correct medical terminology.

People have two primary domains. Two components which are entirely different and are dependent on one another. The thinking domain and the emotional domain.

We have an emotional domain – the feeling part of us – mad, happy, frustrated, guilty, delighted – there are many words to describe our feeling state. Feelings and emotions are states of chemistry in our bodies. Emotions are physical states that we **feel**. The body chemistry that becomes an emotion is caused by what we put in our bodies, i.e., chemicals and **very important our thoughts**. Let me be clear. What you **think** can make the chemistry of emotion. We have already discussed the cough scenario. I'll give another example. The senior student at school gets a notice first hour. "Come to the office. You have a text book fine that must be taken care of before we allow you to graduate." So, with **feelings** of anger and fear, the student goes to the office. The secretary says, "Oh, yes, let me see. Oh, ah, they found the chemistry book that you paid for last year, so here is a refund of 28 dollars. There everything taken care of. You are all set." How does that student **feel** now? Happy? Relieved? Delighted? Note there have been no drugs involved. Just **thinking**, but the body chemistry is now different. We know that because the **emotions** are different. Proof positive – what we **think** causes our feelings and emotions.

So, if we are to manage our emotions, then we must learn to manage our **thinking**, or in medical terms, our cognitive domain. We have already explained the Cognitive Domain which itself has two components. The stream of **consciousness** – the thinking that we do with full awareness, our self-talk. Our own voice that we "hear" in our head. Also the **pre-conscious** component contains all that we have learned, what we expect, what is important to us, all of our personal rules and strategies for getting along, for

defending ourselves and going after what we want. The **power** of our pre-conscious mind is that it **is connected to the chemistry of our emotions**.

One more example, you are a passenger in your friend's classic car on the way to a weekend car show. You spill a whole cup of coffee in the front seat. Your dominant emotions will probably be embarrassment, frustration, guilt. Remember we explained the pre-conscious mind needs "cues." Once these cues are received, the pre-conscious mind starts thinking and our emotions are triggered – and so is our behavior – all in an instant, less than one second of time.

Spilling the coffee is the event, the **cue**.

The pre-conscious mind thinks and says to you, "You idiot. How dumb are you for spilling the coffee. It's not cool to be dumb." Emotion of embarrassment.

Pre-conscious also says "This has already happened. We have a real mess here and now can't undo it." Emotion of frustration.

Pre-conscious also says "Now look at the problem you caused your friend. This is a classic car. You should know not to be drinking coffee in the car!" Emotion – guilt.

More from the pre-conscious. "Get paper towel. Take action quickly. Be sure to pay for the towel, do the cleaning, buy some carpet cleaner, do the work, and pay all costs. Then that's the best I can do to make it better." "There, now I've paid my dues!" "I'm a good person."

Understand all of the emotions and action plans come from our mind integrating what we have learned about the presenting situation and what we hope to accomplish. We are people. We **think**, then **feel**, then **act**.

The reason for training is always two fold. We have to learn what is the problem, what to do about it, how to do it. Notice this is all **understanding**. Then we need the skills to do the **action**.

Knowing a starter needs to be rebuilt is different from having the skills to do the job.

EMOTIONS CREATE OUR PERSONAL ENERGY

Now our emotions are the energy part of us. Our emotions can help us or hinder us.

When a professional auto technician accidentally torques the hydraulic line to the breaking point, there will be the initial emotion of frustration, but the emotion must not become overpowering and lead to foolish actions, like throwing tools or profane verbal outbursts.

Learning to manage our emotions is part of life. Once the chemistry of emotion is underway, we now have to manage this body chemistry as well as the issue that caused it. An extra complication is that much of the thinking was pre-conscious, out of our immediate control. Since we can't stop the emotions ahead of time, we must manage what we are experiencing.

The following strategies will help manage emotions.

Talk to yourself about what needs to be done now, not what should have been done.

Take a break. Physically step away from the problem. Stop to rest or work on something else.

Talk accurately to yourself. Say what actually happened. Avoid scolding yourself or saying negative things about the job or the work place.

Make a deliberate plan on how you want to go back to work on the problem.

Talk with someone else. Sometimes seeking advice or hearing someone else's suggestion can be useful. It can also be reassuring to hear "Yeah, that's happened to me too."

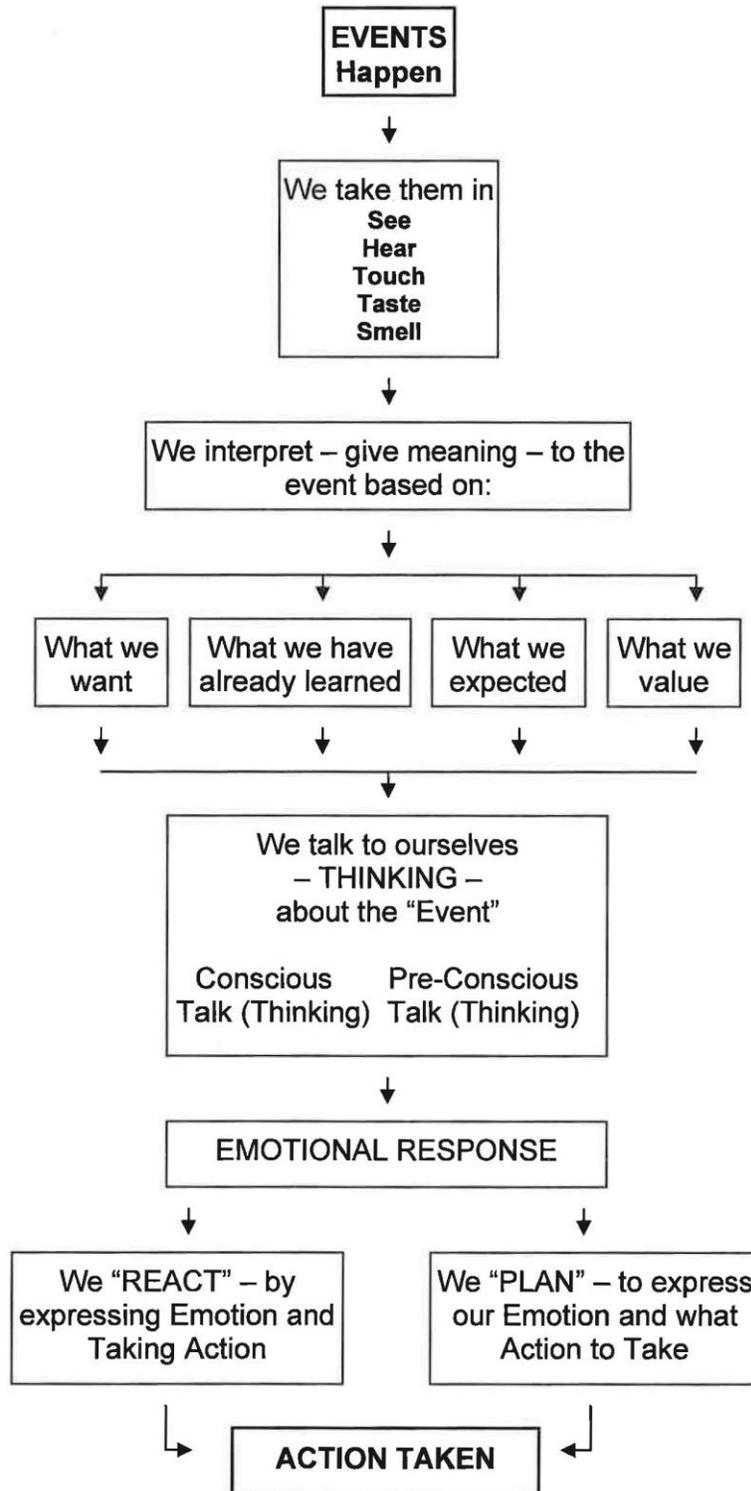
ACTIVITY

This will be a good time to watch the video "Managing Your Emotions." During this video, you will hear an explanation of the concepts you have just read about. You will also have an opportunity to see mentoring in action. Notice how the Mentor teaches the younger technician how to manage himself in a more professional way and how the Mentor uses the same technique to deal with his own emotions.

We are now ready for a simple but accurate description of How People Work.

Discuss the following flow chart. You should be able to explain every section.

EVENT → THINKING → OUTCOME



UNDERSTANDING MOTIVATION

Is it possible to motivate someone else? The short answer is “no.” Not everyone is motivated to accomplish the same goals. So, how is someone motivated? Let’s take a quick look at the stages of motivation to gain a better understanding of what we **can** do to help our Interns become more successful.

1. **Desire.** To be motivated to accomplish a goal, a person must first *desire* that goal. They must have an interest in the outcome. Stated another way, the goal must fit the Intern’s **value** system.
2. **Plan.** Once a person has determined their desire to accomplish a particular goal, they must set a *plan* to achieve that goal. What are the steps that will be needed to take action?
3. **Feasibility study.** After laying out their plan, a person must evaluate the *feasibility* of carrying it out. Is the plan too hard? Is the effort that will be expended be worse than not accomplishing the goal? Does one have the skill to carry out the plan? **This is where “motivation” most often breaks down.**
4. **Action.** After determining that the plan is reasonable, a person must carry out the plan. Now one must put the plan into *action*.
5. **Feedback.** In order to feel or know that the goal has been accomplished, most people need feedback. Feedback can be a tangible result or it can be praise from someone who is respected.

Mentors can help most with motivation by assisting with the feasibility study. Mentors help their Interns by providing information and teaching the new skills which may be required to carry out the plan. Mentors can also aide their Interns by helping them see the value in accomplishing certain goals, including the reality of effort and the time required. We all benefit from encouragement on the way to achieving long term goals.

WHAT YOU AS A MENTOR WILL BE DOING

The “tasks” that mentors do can be broken into seven main categories

- First and foremost, you become a **role model**. Your work habits, the way you follow – or don’t follow – safety procedures and even your general attitude about the kind of work you do and the business where you work will all be absorbed by your intern.
- You will be the first **resource to be consulted**. In fact, this is one of the best signals that you have obtained mentor status. Your intern will seek both advice and information. Mentors understand that an authentically asked question is never a foolish question, no matter how obvious the answer may seem to be.
- Mentors take the initiative to **verbalize their observations and make suggestions** regarding an intern’s behavior and future plans. Mentors introduce new ideas and point out possibilities and opportunities that may be outside an intern’s awareness.

- **Mentors are good allies** during time of trouble. When an intern has made a “social error” or outright mistake, mentors use these circumstances as “teachable moments.” This is how all of us gain our “experience.”
- **Mentoring is a lot like good coaching.** We work hard to teach our players the strategy and skills of a game, but we can’t take the field in their place. As mentors, we are both coaches and cheerleaders as our interns learn the strategies and skills needed to become professional automotive technicians.
- **Mentors help students build their professional identity.** This can also be called their professional reputation.
- **Mentors are patient.** More detail is in order here.

Patience

Patience is not a virtue that some folks have and some don’t. Patience is a little different from frustration tolerance. Patience is the result of two fundamental components – accurate **expectations** and **an understanding of the situation.**

For example, if you are attending a major sporting event, you **expect** crowds, including lines at the gate and the concession stands. “It comes with the territory.” Our accurate anticipation of circumstances helps us be “patient.”

An example of the “understanding” part of patience is as follows: You are in line at the post office and customer at the service window seems to be taking “forever” with his transaction. It is hard to be patient. Then you notice that the customer is totally blind. Is it easier to be patient now? Probably yes.

The roots of patience are accurate expectations coupled with understanding. In order to establish a meaningful mentoring relationship with your intern, you will need to be patient and demonstrate that patience. Here are some expectations that will help with mentor patience.

Expect your intern to be in the learning process

Answer all questions directly and with details that teach. This signals to the intern that you do not see questions as “silly” or “dumb.” Encourage your intern to ask. Sarcastic or “smart aleck” answers to questions will sabotage the mentor-intern relationship.

Expect mistakes

When mistakes are made, the wise mentor understands that this is the time to provide encouragement. The understanding mentor avoids scolding about the present mistake and focuses first on how to correct the mistake and then how to avoid such a mistake in the future. Tone of voice and body language will be the most important way to demonstrate your patience and understanding.

Expect to explain things more than once

The workplace is a whole new multi-faceted experience for interns. When there are many diverse things to learn, people tend to absorb only part of what is presented. The result is that we have to teach the same group of concepts several times in order for them all to be understood and absorbed.

Expect an intern's work pace to be slower

Part of achieving professional status as an automotive technician is learning the time-saving moves of the business. Experience which instills self-confidence is usually the only way to learn how to do things more quickly.

Expect less work productivity

Experience is again the usual way technicians learn how to make every move count. When you are teaching the additional activity will require additional time.

Following are some issues that will help with the **understanding** component of patience:

- Your intern will be a high school student. He or she may have had a part-time job somewhere in the past, but this is their first venture into a career.
- Your intern is stepping directly from the world of high school to your world of the adult work place. We must understand that the transition into the adult work place requires the learning of many lessons.
- Your Intern will be anxious to please. We all know that trying too hard can lead to mistakes.
- Remember it is hard to be seen as the 'rookie.'

WHAT MENTORING IS NOT

Before the role of mentor begins to seem completely overwhelming, here are some realistic limits:

- ❖ **We must remember to confine our mentoring activities to the work place and the profession of automotive technology.** This is important because competent mentors can become so enthusiastic about their role that they may take on responsibilities that are beyond what they should assume.

- ❖ **High School students can be in a conflicted situation with their families.** As a mentor, you are not “the parent,” a professional counselor, or a social worker. If an intern brings up family matters, especially if they are asking you for advice or to intervene in any way, refer the intern back to their automotive instructor or high school counselor. Encourage the intern to seek help, but explain that this kind of help is outside your area of responsibility and that you want the intern to get responsible help. After all, we would not ask a transmission technician to repair torn interior fabric.
- ❖ **Never loan an intern money, and, of course, never ask an intern for money.** If the loan is made and the intern is late with repayment, everyone will be embarrassed. The intern will feel ashamed and will avoid the relationship. The mentor will feel frustrated and resentful. All of this can be avoided by the following rule –never loan or borrow money.
- ❖ **Mentors should not be “buddies.”** It is not appropriate to “hang out” with your intern. You do not want to be put in the position of being asked to pick up a 6-pack. A mentor must be a professional role model. When mentors encourage (or simply passively allow) interns to violate laws or disregard company policy, the powerful status of “mentor” will be severely compromised, if not completely lost.
- ❖ **In a healthy intern-mentor relationship, the intern expects the mentor to do things correctly and the right way.** Using constant profanity, being a part of underage drinking, or violating standards of social practices or professional practices will not end in a “buddy” relationship. More likely, it will cause the intern to define the adult who behaves this way as “no better than the kids.” Mentoring is about NOT being “one of the kids.”

SENDING CLEAR VERBAL MESSAGES

In order to send a clear verbal message, you need to be clear in your own mind first about the purpose of the message.

Most communication between people has one of the following purposes:

Reasons for communication

- approval
- information
- connecting
- disapproval
- instruction
- disconnecting
- expressions of emotions
- request for feedback
- asking for assistance

The following dialog will help you see the differences in these types of communication:

Situation: Intern needs to pick up dry cleaning before 5 p.m. and just remembered while at work.

Intern: What time is it? (Question)

Mentor: It is 3.32. (Stating reality)

Mentor: I think the clock may be a few minutes off, though. The power went out a couple of hours ago and the clock may have been set wrong. (Explain theory)

Intern: I just remembered that I need to pick up my dry cleaning before 5 today. Would it be alright if I left early? (Question)

Mentor: You put me in an awkward situation here. The work load is backed up and the boss will be mad if he sees you left and knows I said it was okay. (Explain emotion)

Mentor: I have an idea though. Kathy in parts often leaves on errands. We should ask her if she can help. (Problem resolution) (DOES Kathy have the authority to decide)

One of the best ways to ensure a clear message is to state the **purpose** of the message first. For example, if you have a question, start by telling the listener “I have a question and could use your help.” This will help prepare the listener for the purpose of your message.

HOW TO LISTEN ACCURATELY

Focus your attention on the speaker.

Listening to another person is more complicated than it may seem. The problem is that our brain may start talking to us before the other person has finished speaking. For example: if a customer says to a technician, “Now there is a big oil spot on my passenger seat ...” the technician may say in his or her head, or even out loud, “Well, I didn’t make the spot. Don’t blame me!” The inside thinking could prevent the technician from hearing the rest of the message, which was, “I think my grandson did it. Do you know how to get it off?”

We call this “data blocking.” We think we already know what the person is going to say, so we do not pay attention to the actual message.

This is not the only reason we may “data block”. We may block data because we already have a theory of our own that we believe is simply more credible than the other person’s. Or, we may simply not believe the other person is credible.

Good listening requires that we stop talking in our head about what **we** think and focus our attention on the speaker. It is hard to think in terms of “not reacting to what is being said,” so instead, think of what you will do. “I will listen to understand the speaker’s

thinking and theory about whatever it is they are talking about. Listening to **their theory** does not mean I agree or disagree with what he or she is saying.

The next step is to prove to the speaker that you heard their theory by saying it back. For example:

Customer: I never use my parking brake because I want it to work if I really need it.
Tech : Oh, so you're thinking that by not using it you are "saving it" for when you really need it?
Customer: Yeah, that's what I mean.

Now the technician can explain what happens to the cables and other mechanical parts if they are not "exercised" on a regular basis.

A listener can also help the speaker send a clear message by asking questions relevant to the topic at hand. For example:

Customer: This car is really messed up. You can tell at every stop light.
Tech: Does it seem to run rough when stopped? It is hard to accelerate because there is no power?
Customer: Yeah. The first one. Rough. Shakes the car. After I put my foot on the gas when the light's green, it's okay.

OTHER THINGS THAT CAN INFLUENCE OUR COMMUNICATIONS – PERSONAL STYLES

Our personal communication style can have a big impact on the messages we send and receive.

So far in our work towards understanding people, we have focused on ways in which people function in basically the same way. Yet, like cars which are basically alike, there are still some very real differences between models. This same reality applies to people. We are all alike in many ways, yet we are all unique as well. People come in different styles and as we interact with one another, the personal style of each person can be a major factor in how the interaction unfolds.

ACTIVITY

We can learn more about our own personal style by completing the *Personal Style Discussion Stimulator*. The *Stimulator* is comprised of a group of questions about our personal preferences. How you respond to the questions will give you a suggestion as to what your style probably is.

This Stimulator is not a test. It is only a way to help illustrate your personal style. The mostly true/mostly false answer to each question is never right or wrong. It is simply a description of your preference.

There are no good or bad styles. All styles promote certain strengths and talents that are useful in the workplace.

Knowing something about our personal style helps us explain our own behavior as well as better understand the behavior of others. Our personal style is developed early in life and tends to remain much the same for our entire lives. Our style can be observed in almost everything we do.

ACTIVITY

Complete the Styles Profile. Score the profile before turning to the next page.

PERSONAL STYLES

The Determined Person

The Determined person is always “on task.” Even if he or she is watching TV, it is because that’s a show they want to see. Determined people think in terms of action plans. They have clearly defined goals and want to know only what will help or hinder them in accomplishing their daily plan. Decisions are calculated, but quickly made.

The Social Person

The Social person consults and trusts his or feelings first. This sense of comfort or discomfort gives direction. He or she is very aware of how interactions are going with other people. The Social person thinks in terms of how others will react and what the roles of others will be in the course of their own daily life.

The Detailed Person

The Detailed person needs lots of information. He or she makes careful decisions regarding behavior and will want to maintain “standards.” Things not “in order” can be a source of discomfort. The Detailed person thinks in terms of what steps need to be taken and what they need to know to take them

The Predictable Person

The Predictable person feels comfortable with structure and tradition. He or she establishes a routine which is “sensible” and then sticks to it. Major changes in life are often greeted with anxiety or frustration. Predictable people think in terms of keeping things on track while avoiding upheaval or conflict.

Let's take a look at ways our personal style can affect our communication.

1. The Determined Person

If you are the Determined person:

The effect on the messages you **send**:

- You may sound like a "know-it-all"
- Your tone may be condescending
- You may take over the conversation
- You may sound "demanding" when you think you are just "being clear"
- You may talk too fast and move from one idea to another too

The effect on the messages you **receive**:

- You may interrupt others before they've expressed all of their ideas
- You may start thinking about what you are going to say instead of listening
- You may discount what you are being told because you have a "better" theory in mind
- You may not pay attention to the emotional signals being sent with the information

What you can do to fit in better:

- Listen more carefully
- Ask what others think
- Be more gentle in your speech
- Slowdown and enjoy the ride

2. The Social Person

If you are the Social person:

The effect on the messages you **send**:

- You may talk too much about things not relevant to the task at hand
- You need to make sure you know the difference between when you are feeling something and when you are thinking something
- You may need to narrow your scope and stay more focused on using **information** instead of **feeling** words
- You need to have a clear reason in mind about **why** you are sending a message

The effect on the messages you **receive**:

- You may “hear” the feeling part very well, but miss some information
- You may let your own feelings get in the way of receiving the information
- You may have a hard time waiting your turn to say what you feel and think
- You may be distracted by some other event within your awareness

What you can do to fit in better:

- Observe the immediate situation more carefully before you “jump in”
- Share the stage – there’s lots of room
- You don’t need to hide your emotions, but you may want to contain them
- Remember there is a job to do

3. The Detailed Person

If you are the Detailed person:

The effect on the messages you **send**:

- You may spend too much time describing how you came to understand something instead of just saying what needs to be understood
- You may give detailed descriptions of situations when fewer details may be more efficient
- You may have a more difficult time describing the bigger picture
- You may avoid telling how you feel, but talk a lot about what you think

The effect on the messages you **receive**:

- You may ask questions which stray or detract from the main point
- You may “get stuck” thinking about part of what is being said and not hear the rest of the details
- You may have a hard time listening to general information. You want to know “what this means
- You may have a hard time hearing what you need to hear in order to make a decision

What you can do to fit in better:

- Pay more attention to those around you, especially how they are feeling or what they are thinking
- Watch out for your own perfectionism – not everything needs to be perfect
- Take input gracefully
- Remind yourself that sometimes there are no definite answers to a situation

4. The Predictable Person

If you are the Predictable person:

The effect on the messages you **send**:

- You may assume others already understand something when they don't
- You may have a difficult time exploring concepts that are new to you
- You may avoid explaining what you need and what you want to happen
- You may have a difficult time explaining priorities

The effect on the messages you **receive**:

- You may have a hard time paying attention to something you don't agree with
- You may stop listening and just "give in" to keep the peace
- You may have a difficult time sorting and prioritizing new ideas
- You may experience feelings of anxiety if you think someone is asking you to change

What you can do to fit in better:

- Know that change is always a bit unsettling to you, and take a few deep breaths
- Offer possible solutions instead of talking against proposed ideas
- Sort out the details of a situation – your feelings may make it difficult to prioritize things
- Tell others what you really feel and think, even though it may be tempting to tell them what you assume they want to hear

There are other factors that can influence the ability of people of any style to communicate accurately as well, such as:

- Fatigue
- Time pressures
- Sickness
- Personal issues

Tips for Getting Along with Other Styles

If you work with the **Determined person**, they will:

- Want to “get things done”
- Prefer to “stick to business.” There will be little time for social interaction
- Want to know who is in charge of what
- Expect quick and clearly defined decisions

If you work with the **Social person**, they will:

- Want to know who is involved
- Talk about how everyone feels about the situation at hand
- Like the “around the family table,” “let’s talk about it” style of interaction
- Want to be directly involved with all decisions that are in his or her sphere of operation

If you work with the **Detailed person**, they will:

- Need lots of information about any project
- Want specifications or other details that will allow him or her to assess the “correctness” of things
- Be a perfectionist, maybe to a fault, causing others to become frustrated
- Be critical and judgmental of others because they don’t measure up to “standards”

If you work with the **Predictable person**, they will:

- Just want things to run at their normal pace with everyone getting along
- to get the job done, the way “we have always done it”
- Sometimes not give true opinions, rather, he or she will just be agreeable
- Want to preserve the organization, something that is already established

ACTIVITY

Watch the video “People Come In Different Styles

MENTORING MATTERS

A CHECK LIST FOR MENTORS

Have a personal plan of action for daily behavior.

Mentors typically have a personal plan of action for their daily behavior. They decide **what** they are going to do, **how** they are going to do it, and **when** they are going to do it. Mentors have a clear plan for their Intern as well.

Keep significant others informed.

Mentors keep others informed. This isn't hard since they have a clear mental plan and vision of their daily behavior. Their associates have a general sense of what is going on in these Mentors' lives and what schedule they usually keep, including the schedule of the Mentor's Intern.

Be accepting and kind regarding others.

Mentors are accepting and kind regarding other people. Mentors avoid making critical remarks about others and do not engage in "jokes" or "stories" that belittle others.

Have a clear sense of priorities, but be adaptable and able to change plans.

Mentors have a clear sense of priorities. Because of this, they are adaptable and able to change plans, even on short notice, when the circumstances warrant that action.

HOW TO HANDLE STRONG EMOTIONS

When Mentors experience strong emotions, whether it is from unexpected situations or just frustrating events, they know how to manage their own feelings. They go through an internal process rather than "lose their temper."

When Mentors are faced with unexpected situations (like when a repair goes wrong or someone backs into a brand-new car,) Mentors use strategies like the following to help manage strong emotions:

- They interrupt what they are doing to think about the situation.
- They label their feelings, rather than lose their temper.

Describe your feelings accurately to yourself using clear words. It is important to describe your **feelings** rather than focusing on the situation.

Useful labels: I'm scared; I'm hurt; I'm frustrated; etc.

Not useful labels: This sucks; He's really a jerk; They're so stupid; I always get dumped on, etc.

Ways to work off the chemistry of emotion

- Take a walk or get involved with some kind of physical activity for a few minutes.
- Talk with someone who can help you settle down and reduce the energy of emotion.
- Take perspective; use clear words.
- Make a deliberate plan to address the situation.

As the emotional chemistry is reduced and the charge of strong emotion starts to dissipate, talk sensibly to yourself. Take perspective. Use clear words.

Consider the following:

- Focus on what do now rather than on what should have been done.
- What additional information would be useful and how can you get it?
- Is there someone else who could be helpful and how can you access that person?
- Make a deliberate plan to address the situation, along with contingency plans in case your first plan cannot be carried out. Remember that actively deciding to take **no action does** qualify as a plan.

When others are confrontive

- **Listen first**

Let them completely express their feelings and ideas. You need to know their feelings and their thinking in order to make a sensible response.

- **Acknowledge their feelings and thinking**

Explain back to them what you understand **their** feelings to be and the content of **their** thinking. This may be a good place to ask questions that will help you understand their thinking more accurately.

- **Take time to deal with the situation**

It may be useful to tell the other person you need time to think about his or her situation before you respond.

If you need this time, set a “date” with the other person for a time when you think you will be ready to address the concern. This future time could be a few minutes or a few days. The value of setting the time is that it lets the other person know you are not simply ignoring his or her concern or looking for a way to exit the conversation.

- **Represent yourself accurately**

Describe how you are feeling and accept responsibility directly when it is appropriate to do so. Explain the situation accurately, focusing on your own **intent**. This will help minimize the perception of “just making excuses.”

- **Explain your thinking about the situation and say what you CAN DO**

Explain your thinking about the situation at hand, including any fundamental values that may be involved (i.e., if someone is angry because you won't remove an emissions system, what consequences are at stake for you.)

Say what you **can do**. Give as much detail as possible, with useful explanations of the reasoning behind your plan of actions.

- **Agree to disagree if that's what it takes to resolve the situation**

If it involves a matter of philosophy – for example, the idea that “being paid hourly is better than being paid by the job” – agreeing to disagree is all this is necessary.

If the situation requires one or both parties to take action and agreement cannot be reached, then we must rely on structure to resolve the problem. If you are the employee, you may disagree with the boss, but you may have to do things his or her way in spite of your disagreement.

- **Always evaluate what is at stake**

Finally, with others, always evaluate what is at stake compared to the value of the well-being of the relationship. This is not a suggestion to “put up and shut up,” but sometimes one can lose perspective on a rather trivial matter.

In other words, ask yourself, “is it worth winning this point if I lose the respect or cooperation of the other person?” It's not worth winning the battle if the effort causes you to lose the war.

So, to summarize quickly, here are some tips you can use when frustrations or other strong emotions arise:

- Take a break from work.
- Take perspective. Remind yourself that some jobs are just hard to do. If you have made a mistake, focus on what to do now versus what should have been done.
- Take a walk, work on something else, talk to a friend.
- When going back to work, have a deliberate plan, work slower and more carefully. Feeling rushed or having a sense that something needs to be completed quickly adds to frustration. Working deliberately this way will help you avoid getting mad all over again.

Being a mentor doesn't mean you have to have all the answers. Mentors are not perfect people.

But if you use the tools from your "Check List," you should be better able to keep yourself in a problem-solving mode with your emotions under control. This consistent example will help others identify you as a mentor.

Using the check list suggestions will help you:

- Focus on issues, rather than personalities, when solving problems.
- Define clear strategies for making decisions.
- Control your emotions and express them appropriately.
- Influence others to manage their emotions.
- Adapt to changing circumstances.
- Observe and accurately describe your own behavior.

Research shows that being respected as a mentor depends far more on **how you are** than **what you know**.

When we talk to successful mentors, we learn that they all seem to have a system for managing themselves; that is, they are able to maintain their own sense of well-being. That enables them to focus on encouraging others as well as on problem-solving.