

Blog 1: Why Women Should Mentor Women

My name is Melissa Fairey and I'm a part of the Commonwealth Women's Mentorship Program. I'm from Toronto Canada, and my mentor Jeanette Vatter, is also from Canada.

By being a part of this pilot program, I was able to truly understand and appreciate the importance of mentorship and more specifically why women should mentor other women.

By having women who have been through similar experiences professionally, academically and personally there can be a level of understanding, support and comradery that is irreplaceable. Through my mentorship with Jeanette I have been able to work through ideas about gender equality in the workplace and how to navigate being an ambitious professional while also having aspirations of starting a family. The amount of understanding between women that came from understanding issues specific to gender equality has been an invaluable part of the program.

Inspired by this program and my mentorship with Jeanette, I did more research into understanding other perspectives of women led mentorship and came across this article that had some great points. The link can be found here: <https://www.themuse.com/advice/why-connecting-with-other-women-is-critical-to-your-career>. The article talks about the importance of connecting with other women throughout your career as sounding boards and a support system.

A quote that particular stood out to me is, "When you surround yourself with female mentors and role models, you have a sounding board- a group of people who will understand your frustrations and can help you decide when and how to handle tough situations. You'll begin to recognize that, no matter what you're facing, you're not alone. You have the emotional support of other women who've been where you are, and who get it".

This quote speaks to me and reminds me of my own relationship with my mentor throughout the program. The necessity of having someone who listens, understands and can give thoughtful advice is an underrated but necessary part of development. I for one am thankful for the opportunity to understand it's importance and will one day pass it on by being a mentor to a young woman.

Blog 2: Lessons Learned – Commonwealth Women's Mentorship Program

The duration of this program has gone by so quickly. When embarking on a 6-month project, you do not anticipate how quickly the time will go and the sheer amount you will learn during the program.

I put together a couple of points about things I have learned through mentorship and the program, in hopes that it will help others. Especially other young women who are embarking at a crossroads and looking for some guidance.

1. Be open and willing to engage in touch conversations with your mentor
2. Your mentor can't make any decisions for you, just be there as a guide

3. Doing the hard work with yourself sometimes means asking yourself hard questions about your long term and short-term goals
4. Women supporting other women is a super power
5. If you were mentored, it is important to pass on those lessons and mentor other young women throughout your career
6. Different perspectives, political views and ideas are sometimes needed to help understand all sides of an issue
7. Sometimes having a mentor isn't about being given the answers, but being given the right questions
8. What you do with mentorship depends on how much work you put into it and into understanding the other person
9. It is very beneficial to talking through something with another person who is not connected to the issue. A sounding board is an important person to have
10. Support each other, and support other young women through generations to pass the torch.

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