

MentorInk Newsletter

... the online publication of Mentoring Solutions Inc. Year 18 Issue 4 October, 2004



In this issue

Emotional Intelligence Part 2-

On empathy. For those of you who have just joined our readership, over the years, many different well-known books have been reviewed. You may want to dig into our archives for back issues. See page 3.



Mentoring Timeline

With page 2, the clock turns to reliving the Olympic experience.

How A Mentor might Contribute

We continue the series. See page 2.



Mentoring in a featured profession. See page 4.

Two studies of note. (see page 5)

Test yourself.

Can you spot the gaps? Part of the Ask Mentor series. Turn to page 4.



UPCOMING:

- Book Review series - Dark Age Ahead
- Mentoring Timeline
- Series: How a Mentor Might Contribute -- more myths about self-help and more



From the Editor:

Past issues have carried everything and anything on knowledge sharing using mentoring and coaching to support blended learning.

Happy reading. Your editor:

Marilynne Miles Gray

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Murphy's Law of Combat

[or how a Mentor Might Contribute - part 3]

"1. The important things are always simple. 2. The simple things are always hard. 3. The easy way is always mined." So says Murphy.

We love the notion that we can fix what's broken on our own. It's called self-help. It's especially easy to fall in love with concepts like concocting our own medicines, so to speak. We might not pause long enough to wonder: *"But is it good medicine? Will it work?"*

There is an appealing myth we can pick up a book and just read with the thought in mind that a solution is bound to leap off the pages -- quick and easy. Self-help often is vastly oversimplified. Buried beneath partial truths is the plain fact that often there is much more hard labor to be done. Even the best self-help quite possibly is too simplistic to be able to manage complex challenges.

For these reasons there are mentors -- people wise enough, objective enough, experienced enough and strong enough to say: *"Not good enough. Needs more practise. Needs more thinking through. You aren't ready."*

Mentors are also people who look at popular panaceas and understand that popular "recipes" don't always work for a particular person at a specific point in time. Or simply don't work at all.

Case in point: The protege is working for a prolonged period of time in a stressful situation with one or more uncollegial peers. How to handle this? Run to the self-help book or internet site. What does it say? *"Vent your anger and it will go away."*

Not so fast says Mentor. Research suggests venting can be counterproductive and might keep the anger going. Expressing anger elevates cardiovascular activity that can contribute to cardiovascular disease. Instead, Mentor suggests the counterintuitive: watch funny movies, listen to soothing music, do things that are absorbing while they give the mind an opportunity to become more objective and more conscious of mood. Remember, in the end, one goal of the learner is to become a reflective practitioner. Seems simple enough but definitely not easy.

Next issue: More myths about self-help.

"THE PERSON WHO KNOWS HOW
WILL ALWAYS HAVE A JOB.
THE PERSON WHO KNOWS WHY
WILL ALWAYS BE HIS BOSS."
~ DIANE RAVITCH"

Mentoring Timeline

Fittingly, with this Mentoring Timeline, we celebrate the 2004 Olympics with an extended piece.

At the last Olympic games in Sydney, Africa's total medal tally was 35 with nine gold medals. Ethiopia, one of the world's poorest countries, earned the highest number of medals, four gold, one silver and three bronze. Ethiopia finished third in the medals ranking, behind the United States and Russia.

In Athens 2004, Africa's sportsmen and women will aim to increase this number. One such African, Kenenisa Bekele from Ethiopia, showed his class and versatility by winning an unprecedented third long and short course double at the World Cross Country championships.

In Sydney, the 22 year old Bekele outsprinted his mentor Haile Gebrselassie to win the 10,000. Later, the protege also took the 5,000 bronze, shattering his mentor's records. That's today, or at least the recent past.

Now, here's a condensation of an account written in 1924 by Thomas P. Curtis, an Olympian in 1896, as a way to see just to what degree the world has changed, not just for athletes but also for the mentor-protege relationship. Imagine, as you read this the shifts that have occurred in attitudes towards training for big events, the mind set of the amateur, expectations, publicity, rewards. Not much is said about the mentor however it is clear conditions and attitudes in some areas have drastically changed.

Perhaps this shift is best captured by the movie Chariots of Fire. What has been the impact then on mentoring? Here's part of what Curtis says:

"When the games were first revived, the public interest at that time, particularly in European countries, was great. In the United States the revival was little advertised, little understood, and owing to these facts and to the great distance which had to be traversed by competing athletes, only two athletic bodies in this country sent representative teams -- Princeton University and the Boston Athletic Association (BAA). The decision to send this latter team was reached less than two weeks before the opening event."

Curtis felt the Olympics lost all of the romance and novelty once they were held outside Athens. *"In 1896, the records made were not particularly good... largely due to the soft track in the Stadium, which had not been entirely completed."*

The small team of five athletes, and trainer-mentor, John Graham, of the B. A. A., sailed from New York in March. *"On*

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Mentoring Timeline©

board, the rear deck was cleared daily at about 3 p.m. and for an hour or more we practiced our different events....Training, however, for athletic sports was hardly at the same standard in any of the European countries. I will never forget a stockily built, curly-haired Frenchman whom we encountered on our way from Brindisi to Patras. He confi ded to me that he was entered in two events, one, the 100-meter dash, and the other the 26-mile Marathon race. He stated very naively that he fi rmly expected to win one and possibly both."

"The fi rst event on the program was the race of 100 meters in which both Burke and I were entered. There were 24 competitors coming from almost every European nation, and the sensation was an odd one. I was drawn in the fi rst heat. Next to me stood the Frenchman, and to my surprise I discovered he was the same stocky little man who had confi ded to me that he was going to compete in the 100-meter race and, also, in the Marathon event. To my surprise, also, while standing on our marks, he was hastily engaged in drawing on a pair of white kid gloves, telling me that the reason he did so was, as he expressed it, "Becuz I am to run before ze Kink." He adopted these same tactics a few days later in the Marathon race and ran the entire 26 miles with a pair of white kid gloves on, only to fi nd on reaching the Stadium some four hours after the crowd and Royal Family had left. He did not, in that race at least, run before "ze Kink." It was quite pathetic."

One of the most unexpected results occurred in the competition for throwing the discus. *"This form of athletic sport had been entirely confi ned to Greece from time immemorial, and no competitor from any other land was familiar with the rules covering the competition or with the proper method of handling the discus itself."*

"Robert Garrett, the Captain of the Princeton Team, decided to enter this event for the fun of it. All other competitors were Greeks, and to see the discus thrown as they handled it was to see grace personified. We are all familiar with the statue of the Discobolus, and the Greek competitors carefully followed the position shown in that work of art. Not so with Garrett, however, who seized the discus in his right hand and swinging himself around and around, the way the 16-pound hammer is usually thrown in this country, threw the discus with tremendous force. His fi rst two attempts, however, were laughable, as the discus, instead of sailing parallel to the ground, turned over and over and narrowly missed hitting some of the audience. On his third and last throw, however, he succeeded in getting the discus away perfectly and, to the chagrin of the Greek champion who had made three perfect throws in the most graceful manner possible, it was found that Garrett's throw exceeded by some two feet the best throw of any other man. I think no one was more surprised than Robert Garrett himself."

One noticeable activity was the total lack of organized cheering. "Our team was assigned a box in the front row of the Stadium, some fi fty feet from that of the King and Queen. At intervals we cheered

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Book Review: Working with Emotional Intelligence - part 2

In 1995, Daniel Goleman published his book on the his research about "the new measure...[that] focuses on personal qualities, such as initiative and empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness." It's his second, follow-up book written in 1998 that's the focus of this series. We're examining it to see if it lives up to it's pronounced agenda of offering us "an entirely new way of thinking about..."

As we continue, we discover Goleman links empathy to mentoring via a chain of ideas. His broad umbrella term is "social radar" with a series of competencies.

Specifi cally, at the point of dealing with empathy, those who "understand others" can sense "other's feelings and perspectives, and [take] an active interest in their concerns".

Following on this, the author suggests people with this competence are "attentive to emotional cues and listen well"; "show sensitivity and understand other's perspectives" and "help out based on understanding other people's needs and feelings".

Sounds like a description of good mentoring.

Here's what he points to as the pay off -- listening well is essential to success in the workplace. What he says next is a motherhood many overlook neglect: "Those who cannot or do not listen come across as indifferent or uncaring, which in turn makes others less communicative... People who seem easy to talk to are those who get to hear more."

Goleman mentions other facets -- empathy needs tempering in organizations with tight resources since too strong an identifi cation with "someone else's need" leads people to be more prone to go to extremes in helping. Such decisions can harm the collectivity. Empathy can cause a certain level of distress that professionals have to learn to manage and balance. As well, empathy has its own politics, more of which will be detailed in part three of this series.

Next issue: The politics of empathy.

**"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great."
~Mark Twain**

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How the Mentor might contribute

When the world is falling apart, sometimes there's a mentor immediately at hand to be a sounding board, a listening post, (with permission) an advisor, and so on. However, should the mentor and protege decide first to take a deep breath, count to ten, then decide what actions might help, here's a few ideas to consider in terms of making things more positive.

Dr. Martin Seligman, former President of the American Psychological Association, has since 1999, focussed on what he calls "positive psychology" drawn from the work and thinking of a number of others including Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Viktor Frankl. Four ideas arise out of this:

1 beyond-self: giving back to the greater community and doing good deeds helps more than just the receiver; others who see this positive behavior being modeled experience an emotion called "elevation" by some. In turn, elevation encourages more human openness, charity, and positive feelings about others.

2 enjoy: studies quality of life and motivation -- some 8,000 North American interviews in one instance -- suggest that enjoying work is crucial. People who experience satisfaction from work itself have a highly positive sense of motivation, engagement, and challenge. Parallel findings in similar studies came from South America, SE Asia, and industrialized Europe.

The "secrets of enjoyment"? Pretty well motherhood ones that many people choose to ignore.

First, choose tasks to match abilities -- neither too easy nor too frustratingly difficult. Second, make certain clear goals are set. In Colaboro, this can be done by using both the Mentoring Agreements© and Mentoring Action Plan© tools -- not only to set those goals but to ensure goals are actually reached. Third, "seek feedback from friendly observers".

As to this last item, more needs to be said. There are "friendly observers", possibly peers, who actually aren't competent to give feedback. Even if qualified, quite often, little thought is given to what feedback entails -- a score? a verbal report? a checklist? a videotaping of the performance? or something else? Certainly mentors are ideal candidates in most instances but not if it is to evaluate which is the boss' role. Much has been said about this issue in mentoring literature, and ignored to the peril of those involved in sharing knowledge and building trust.

3. rose-colored glasses world view: It all begins with negative thinking that commonly leads to abnormal and extended periods of stress enough to elevate cardiovascular functions and compromise the immune system.

Nurturing optimism can be a preventative, healthful way of dealing with this stress. It's claimed we can "teach" people an optimistic resilient style and good coping behaviors for better responses to life's flooding.

Nurturance of optimistic styles is a preventative "medicine"; those taking this approach don't see setbacks in only negative terms and these people bounce back better and faster than those who don't think and act along these lines.

4. humor: there have been a number of studies to show the value of smiling and laughing as an antidote to depression and negativity. ~~

The Alphabet According to Mentor

C is for creativity. Mentor has worked with many forms during the thousands of years he has been around. There are the methodical, the mercurial, those who prefer "the big idea", others tweak and improve in small ways. Some wander from job to job while others never move from the security of one organization or group. Some prefer working in groups and do well at it; still others are loners.

It is absolutely crucial to understand the major shift that has occurred as to how we view the learner -- whether this person is creative or not. I say it is crucial because while the thinking generally has progressed, there yet some who hang on to an old idea of how to treat learners

In the distant past, the neophyte was an "empty vessel" into which the master or expert poured his (normally) knowledge until the learner was full.

In the 1980s, Dr. William A. Gray was writing about The NEW Mentoring Paradigm that, in effect, said the old dictionary definitions of mentoring were inadequate as mentoring now had to acknowledge the education and life experiences proteges brought with them into the relationship. Mentors had to both equip *and* empower.

Our mentoring partnerships must acknowledge not only the differing shapes of creativity but also must understand that people are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge and skills. ~~

**"Don't judge each day by the
harvest you reap,
but by the seeds you plant."
~ Robert Louis Stevenson**

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Getting it right!

Back in May 2002, we were ready to replace “OMS”, the Online Mentoring System® (our original mentoring software) with a new concept. Needing a new name, we chose Colaboro® to convey the idea of “collaboration” for knowledge sharing and transfer.

Here’s a quick and easy way to remember what our tool stands for:

Think “co” as in together

“lab” as in laboratory - an apt description for the extensive testing we do to get it right

“oro” - as in gold - the high standard we strive to meet.

If you’d like more about Colaboro®, and the right version for your organization, call us today toll free at 1-877-955-0314

2 Studies of note:

To study new teachers’ experiences and determine best practices in teacher recruitment, support and retention, the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers at the Harvard Graduate School of Education is conducting a five-year, qualitative study of new teachers in Massachusetts from 2002-2007. Results from the first phase of the study, in which project staff interviewed first and second year teachers in diverse school settings, found that induction and **mentorship** practices were severely lacking -- and this has serious implications for teachers staying in the profession.

Seventy percent of companies with above average financial performance say employee development is a building block of future corporate success, according to a study by Watson Wyatt Worldwide.

The study, Competencies and the Competitive Edge, consists of survey responses from 1,020 North American organizations and in-depth case studies of 17 companies, including on-site evaluations and interviews.

Also cited were efficiency (64%), technology (58%) and financial stability (42%) as laying the groundwork for success.

When asked about the primary human resource policies and practices that can help employees become more productive, study respondents cited training and development, performance management, and having a clearly defined set of skills and abilities.

Mentoring Programs were among the most frequently-cited HR programs in high-tech, health care (where they came in as first choice), energy, and finance sectors. Other programs typically cited were: Leadership/Management and Technical Training.

(Source: Watson Wyatt Worldwide ©2002)



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whenever one of our number was successful. We found we were listened to with a great deal of interest and surprise, so much so that when we had given no cheer for an hour or more the special aide of King George walked solemnly down from the Royal Box, stopped in front of our box, and touching his hat, said in the most solemn voice, 'His Majesty, the King--requests--that for him --once more-- you will make--that peculiar noise.' This we promptly did--the King standing and touching his cap in acknowledgment."



The Marathon race was one in which the Greeks took more interest than in any other and for which their athletes had been training a long time. One woman wanted to compete, but was not allowed to start.

"The men were set off at two o'clock, each competitor followed by two soldiers on horseback. In the meantime, the other events were progressing in the Stadium. The 100-meter finals came first. As this race came immediately before the finals in the hurdles, our trainer-mentor thought it unwise for me to enter, so I was kept out to concentrate all my energies on the next race. Burke won by a foot and the American flag was promptly run up on the flagpole set near the entrance. This was done throughout the Games at the end of each contest, thereby enabling the spectators to tell the nationality of the winner, a thing that would have been otherwise almost impossible."

Next came the finals in the hurdle race. *"The race was nip and tuck from start to finish. I beat out my closest opponent in the stretch by a scant two feet. As this was the race I had come especially to run, I breathed much more freely and was able to look at the other final contests with much greater pleasure."*

"At about half past four a gun was heard--the signal that the first one of the Marathon runners had been sighted. The excitement was intense, everyone wondering whether the man was

Greek, American, English or French. All contests then in progress were temporarily stopped to await the arrival of the winner. In the course of a few minutes a tremendous cheering was heard outside the gate of the Stadium, and a man in the dress of a Greek peasant ran up the steps and onto the track, making his way towards the King's throne, in front of which had been placed the finish line. His appearance showed the tremendous effort that he had made, and the fearful ordeal he had undergone owing to the condition of the roads. He was covered with dust and grime, the sandals that he wore on his feet were in rags, and his drawn face showed the strain he had suffered. His name was Loues and he was a Greek donkey driver from the little town of Marousi."

"As soon as the people were able to recognize him, the cheering and clapping of hands that broke forth was deafening. Hundreds of pigeons which had been kept concealed until then were set free, with Greek flags tied to their feet, hats were thrown in the air; the Crown Prince walked onto the track and congratulated Loues, and all the pent up enthusiasm that the Greeks had been saving up during the past six months for this very event, broke loose with a vengeance. It was almost a half-hour before any sort of peace was restored."

By winning this race, Loues won for himself everlasting glory throughout Greece.

"His name has been carved over the entrance to the Stadium, he was given 25,000 francs by an enthusiastic Greek banker, he succeeded in marrying his sweetheart, whom her father had hitherto kept from him on account of his poverty, and wherever he went he was received with shouts of welcome as the man who had vindicated the glory of Greece against the athletes of all the world."

"One thing only remained to keep us in Athens after this, and that was the giving of the prizes which consisted of an olive branch cut from the sacred grove of Olympus, a large silver medal especially designed, and a diploma, consisting of a symbolic engraving giving the name of the winner, the race won, etc., in Greek letters. During the week following the Games, in our progress through the streets, we were greeted with cries of "Nike, Nike" [Victor]."

Shopkeepers gave them small trinkets and gifts -- handkerchiefs and neckties -- that the athletes were embarrassed to take gratis.

"We arrived in Boston on May 7, after a trip of a little over seven weeks, a trip which I think few of us will ever forget."

[Sources: Mohammed Allie, Cape Town; MIT's alumni magazine, Technology Review, July 1924]