Characteristics of a Good Mentor

Many people feel that being a mentor requires special skills, but mentors are simply people who have the qualities of good role models.

Table1 below lists twelve characteristics that you may want to think about as you are mentoring.

Table 1. Twelve Characteristics of a Good Mentor[1]	
1. Mentors listen.	They maintain eye contact and give fellows their full attention.
2. Mentors guide.	Mentors are there to help their fellows find life direction, never to push them.
3. Mentors are practical.	They give insights about keeping on task and about setting goals and priorities.
4. Mentors educate.	Mentors educate about life and their own careers.
5. Mentors provide insight.	Mentors use their personal experience to help their fellows avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions.
6. Mentors are accessible.	Mentors are always available as a resource and a sounding board.
7. Mentors give constructive criticism.	When necessary, mentors point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on their fellow's behavior, never their character.
8. Mentors are specific.	Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved, and the benefits of various actions.
9. Mentors care.	Mentors care about their fellow's progress in their fellowship and career planning, as well as in their personal development.
10. Mentors succeed.	Mentors not only are successful themselves, but they also foster success in others.
11. Mentors are supportive.	No matter how painful the fellow's experience, mentors continue to encourage them to learn and to improve.
12. Mentors are admirable.	Mentors are usually well respected in their organizations and in their community.

[1] Table reproduced with permission from Weinberger, SG and the Mentor Consulting Group. What makes a good mentor? *Best Practices in Human Resources.* 1999; Issue 653.